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BEECH BLUFF



FANNIE WARNER



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BEECH BLUFF,

A

TALE OF THE SOUTH.

BY FANNIE WARNER.



P. J. KENEDY & SONS
44 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK

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1800Z

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BEECH BLUFF.



CHAPTER I.

THE EVE OF DEPARTURE.

"And to-morrow you leave us for the sunny South?"

"Yes! and I hope it may prove as sunny as it is represented. De Bow says 'a more lovely heaven does not smile on the classic land of Italy than on the favored inhabitants of Georgia. I fervently hope that those whom destiny throws me with will smile as graciously upon me as heaven does upon them.'"

"I hope indeed that your lines will be cast in pleasant places, and that you will not have reason to regret your determination to adopt the vocation of Governess. I must bid you good bye this evening, as a business engagement will prevent my seeing you at the cars in the morning; but accept my

warmest wishes for your happiness, and in your sympathy for those in bondage abroad do not forget those at home, who would have been your willing slaves; and remember *one* in particular who would have gladly remained your slave for life. Farewell!"

The door closed hurriedly. A quick step echoed along the gravelled walk as the young girl whom the speaker had addressed turned to the window, and hastily snatching the curtain aside strove to catch a last glimpse of that manly form. "Farewell, farewell is a lonely sound," was murmured in a low voice, and then as if to confirm the truth of the second line of the verse, she heaved a deep sigh. Turning to the piano, she commenced to gather up some pieces of music scattered over the instrument, when the door opened and an elderly lady entered the apartment.

"Who was here a few moments ago, my dear?"

"It was Mr. Howard, mother," replied the young lady.

"Mr. Howard!" echoed the mother in surprise, "he did not remain long. Will he see you to the cars in the morning?"

"He said not: a business engagement will prevent him from seeing me again, and even compelled him to take a hasty leave this evening." "I think" she continued in a tone of sadness, "I feel rather glad than otherwise for I wish to devote every moment to you and I don't care to be obliged to talk to strangers."

THE EVE OF DEPARTURE.

"You certainly do not consider Mr. Howard, a stranger, Edith?"

"Not in the sense you mean dear mother; but he is not one of the family, and"—she hesitated.

"And what my child?"

Edith colored and turned away as if to avoid her mother's searching glance, then replied in a tone of impatience, as if the subject were unpleasant. "Well, I do not wish any one to accompany me to the cars but those I love best—yourself dear mother, and George and Gracie."

There was a pause, Edith continued to arrange the pieces of music and place them carefully in the music portfolio at her side. Her mother crossed the room, and seated herself on the sofa near an open window. It was a lovely September evening, and the garden was silvered over with the pale moonlight; she looked out upon the quiet scene but not with the same calm happy light in her eye with which she usually viewed it. Tears dimmed her vision, and sadness weighed heavily at her heart, as she thought of the separation on the coming morrow. The last piece of music was in its place; taking the portfolio in her hand, Edith turned to leave the room, when her steps were arrested by her mother's voice desiring her to remain.

"I wish to have some conversation with you this evening, my daughter; this will be the last opportunity I shall have of seeing you alone. To morrow you leave home to be absent two long years; before you go, will you not make a confidante of

your mother? Tell me, why you cannot accept Charles Howard's offer of marriage; did he renew his proposal this evening?"

"He did not, mother; he merely alluded to the subject and was gone before I could reply."

"And, had he given you an opportunity, what would your reply have been?"

"The same as heretofore; I can never be Charles Howard's wife."

"It is very strange, Edith! I know of no objection to him; he seems in every way worthy, and I am convinced that you take more than an ordinary degree of interest in him;—then why is it, pray, that you are so decided in your rejection of his suite?"

Tears filled Edith's eyes. "I will not try to conceal from you, dear mother, that I do entertain for him more than a sentiment of friendship, but—I have no confidence in his steadfastness. I certainly believe that he loves me now, but I doubt if his fickle nature will stand the test of a two years absence."

"But why put him to that test, my child?"

"It's true, I am not actually *obliged* to leave home, but you know there's a 'divinity shapes our ends,' and believing my vocation to be that of governess, I have made it the subject of earnest prayer, the result of which has been the acceptance of the position I am going so far from home to fill; but only with your consent dear mother; without it I ✓

would not leave you. Even if I were engaged to Charles, I should postpone our marriage for at least two years, doubting as I have reason to do, the genuineness of his love."

"But, why are you so skeptical? you have never told me, child."

"Why mother, have you forgotten poor May Webb? Whenever I find my heart beating faster and faster at Charles' approach, I am sure to see *her* dear sad face rise up in judgment against him; then I could loath myself for loving one who could so deliberately win that young heart, only to cast it aside as a worthless bauble. I would fear to trust my happiness in such hands; I repeat, I have no confidence in his *steadfastness*, and I would rather remain all my life, poor Edith Stanford the Governess, than be the neglected wife of the rich Charles Howard."

"And I would have you remain as you are my daughter, in preference to being the neglected wife of the greatest in the land; but we often err in our estimate of another's character, and perhaps you do Mr. Howard injustice. I have some knowledge of the circumstance you allude to, but it occurred long ago—when he was scarcely twenty, I know he has repented that youthful indiscretion and is very different now—he appears so perfectly upright and honorable, so thoroughly manly, and, to me, trustworthy. I sometimes think my child, that it is his *religion* you object to—you would rather your husband were a Catholic."

"He has no religion mother; he has often told me that it was all the same to him, Catholic, Presbyterian or Methodist; he would be any thing I desired. He is an *Indifferent*; without a single vice that I am aware of, he has many greivous faults—and is totally destitute of religious principle—like a bark at sea, without rudder or compass. I have studied him well. Fortune has favored him in every particular, and Nature certainly has not been niggard of her gifts. Of high social standing, rich in the world's wealth, and possessed of genius and manly beauty, one almost forgets when under the influence of his fascinations that there is one thing needful, and which, after sounding him well, I fear I could never supply. His susceptibilities, on matters pertaining to the life to come, seem to be perfectly blunted. I have tried to draw him into serious discussions, but he has always turned me off with a laugh, and a declaration that he was ready to espouse any religion, only I must not ask him to read; he was willing to take it all on trust; 'what should it be—Catholic, Hottentot or Jew?' I am convinced that nothing but the special grace of God will ever waken him to a sense of his accountability to his maker."

"But Edith, his love for you—"

"Pardon me, mother, his love for me is not of such a nature as would be likely to operate for the eternal interest of either of us; were it not for my religion, which furnishes so much for the heart to rest upon, I might become absorbed in an attach-

ment that would bring me misery, as it did poor May Webb; what you style a youthful indiscretion I consider almost a crime.

It was seven years ago, but I remember as if it were but yesterday that I culled the fairest flowers in my garden to lay beside the sick girl's pillow."

"I have always believed Mr. Howard to have been unjustly censured," interrupted the mother.

"Now listen mother; you are ignorant of many of the circumstances, and let me relate them as I *know* them to be true. I was but twelve years old and May was seventeen. Each day as I passed from school I stopped at the cottage for I loved her, but it made my heart ache to see her passing so rapidly from earth; when the autumn winds came and I was told that they would hasten her death I wept bitterly, but child as I was I shed not a single tear when a few weeks after I gazed on her face which was so calm and beautiful in death's repose that it seemed to bespeak the peace and rest of Paradise. *Then* I thought it hard that she should be called from earth so young, now I understand it was her salvation, tho' that does not in the least, lessen Charles Howard's culpability; she died a most edifying death; the Webbs were merely nominal Catholics, never having identified themselves with the Church, and May had not even made her first communion. But in the early stage of her illness she requested her mother to send for the clergyman, and from that time she gave herself wholly up to God. 'Tis true she inherited consumption, but up to the period of Charles Howard's sudden departure

she had seemed strong and healthy. There is not a doubt that grief and disappointment developed the disease. Frequently during her sickness she received the sacraments, and often said to her mother, "God's ways are not as our ways. He has sent this sickness to bring us all to Him; now I see what a selfish, sensual life I led, and had every thing occurred as I desired I should never have found the new life that has dawned upon me now." Another time she addressed her mother abruptly as tho' her mind had been dwelling upon the subject, "do you know mother, that never identifying one's-self with the Church is self-excommunication? Going to mass occasionally don't constitute a Catholic; what a waste of time to live in the world without God!"

I had known Charles Howard two years before I learned from Mrs. Webb that he visited her house as her son's friend when May was sixteen; from the first he appeared to take a deep interest in every thing concerning his friends little sister as he called her.

After a vacation of six weeks, May's brother returned to college to complete his studies, but Charles remained in B—— and continued to visit the cottage. May was made the recipient of books and flowers, and every word and action of her brother's friend spoke volumes of love; when his handsome face bent over her to read some fine passage in a favorite book, her tell-tale face revealed but too plainly that she returned his love and trusted him. Months went on, months of happiness to May, for ✓

every evening found Charles at the cottage, almost filling the place of her brother; she looked up to him with a pure and holy love amounting almost to veneration, and her mother welcomed him as a son. Suddenly he became cold and distant, and his visits grew less frequent; at length they ceased altogether. One day, after an absence of several weeks, he called at Mrs. Webb's for the purpose, he said, of bidding them good-bye. May asked him, with astonishing calmness, almost indifference, how long he purposed remaining abroad.

"Not longer," he replied carelessly, "than three years." He left. After traveling over Europe the specified time, he returned to find May in a happier home than it could have been in his power to furnish her. When informed of her death, his only remark was:

"Ah, well! better so; she was a good little girl."

"Better so, indeed. He never would have gained her heaven; God's 'way' was the best; it was a way by which May's mother and brother were made good practical Christians."

"How did you become acquainted with these circumstances or details?" asked Edith's mother, rising to close the shutters.

"All I have told you I learned from Mrs. Webb. Her motive in communicating the facts was a disinterested one; she could not without a word of warning see me deceived as her own child had been. It was not necessary, however; I had fathomed his character, and knew we were not made for each other."

"Then I charge you, my daughter, do not leave home cherishing his image in your heart."

"Never fear dear mother! I believe the tone of my mind is perfectly healthy, and that will control my heart; the thought of your favorite—looking up roguishly into her mother's face—is always followed too closely by that of May Webb, and though I do not promise to forget him, you may rest assured that I shall not treat his image with any more tenderness or affection than it deserves. But it is late, very late, and I must go to my room and see how Gracie progresses with the packing; good night, dearest mother, and pleasant dreams."

Edith left the room, and after loitering a moment in the hall to speak with her brother George she ran lightly up the stairs. She found her sister Grace seated on the floor beside a large trunk, deliberating with a grave face whether she should put Edith's writing portfolio and dressing case in the top or at the bottom of the trunk, which question her sister settled immediately by saying that she should wish to use both articles on her journey, and therefore they must go in the top where she could get easy access to them; she then commenced to assist Grace to pack, and while the sisters are thus engaged, we will take a look at them.

Edith is tall and graceful, and though slight, her figure is well rounded and exquisitely proportioned. Her dark hair, of which she has a profusion, is dressed in plain bands, and wound in heavy plaits around her small, finely formed head. No ornament either of ribbon or tinsel mars that "crown-

ing glory of woman." Her eyes are large, dark and soft, but in animated conversation they light up with a brilliancy perfectly bewildering. The form of her face is oval; her complexion dark but clear, and the blood mounts to her cheeks, giving them a color but a trifle less ruddy than that of her delicately formed lips. Her teeth are white and regular, and the character of the lovely mouth baffles description. It is one of blended firmness and sweetness, and when she smiles, renders her irresistible. Edith is certainly beautiful; but aside from the beauty of form and feature, there is a nameless charm about her, a something in her manner and bearing that speaks of good birth and breeding, of innate refinement, and nobleness of soul. Her entire unconsciousness of her own loveliness, forgetfulness of self; her affectionate attentions to all, and regardful care not to wound the feelings of any, have made her the darling of her home and the favorite of a large circle of friends.

Grace is just sixteen, and in personal appearance is the very opposite of her sister. Her light hair, blue eyes, and fair round face, give her the appearance of being much younger than she really is. She is one of those innocent, winsome beings whom one cannot look upon without loving. The same peculiar smile which we have described in Edith belongs to Grace also, and is the only point of resemblance between the sisters.

But the last article has been placed in the trunk, and the packing is finished. Grace, who always occupies her mother's room, has given the good-

night kiss, and Edith is left alone. It is a warm night, and throwing herself in a large easy chair beside the low window, she fastens back the curtain which drapes it, and looks out upon the night. She thinks of the Past, and her eyes turn toward a slab of white marble, beneath which rest the remains of that good old man, her grandfather. It is a little to the north, just above the spring-house, and is quite perceptible in the moonlight. Beside it are two other graves, and above all there waves a drooping willow. How well she remembered her grandfather's voice and manner as he used to bid her "keep on the sunny side, my dear; the sunny side, for it is always damp in the shade;" and then she thinks of the Present, and wonders if she is keeping on the "sunny side" by leaving home and friends to go among strangers; or if she will be cast in the shade at her southern home. Rising to prepare for her couch, she murmurs, "I will, as Longfellow bids, go forth to meet the shadowy Future, without fear, and with a brave heart!"

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECTION.

EDITH and Grace Stanford are the daughters of a widow; their father died when Grace was an infant; he had been wealthy but extravagant and improvident, and when his affairs were settled after his death, it was found that but a mere pittance was left for the support of the widow and orphans. Edith was three years of age, and George, the only son, but nine, when they were bereaved of a father's care. Mrs. Stanford had been raised quite plainly, but during her married life had resided in the beautiful village of B——, in one of our most northern States, and had been surrounded by every luxury. She was a woman of good sense, and when she learned that everything must be sold, and there was no alternative but for her to return to her father's house, she did not murmur, but calmly agreed to the proposal, saying that she should not feel like an interloper, as, being the only child, there were no fidgety aunts or bachelor uncles to be annoyed by her little ones.

Mr. Allen, the father of Mrs. Stanford, was a plain farmer, residing in the country on a small farm about four miles from B——. His wife, Mrs. Stanford's stepmother, had been dead a year, and he gladly welcomed to his lonely hearth his daughter, and gazed with pleasure on the bright faces of his

grandchildren. Five years passed, during which time Mrs. Stanford taught Edith and George at home; at the end of that time she was persuaded to send them to a school in the village. They boarded at the house of a friend during the week, returning home every Friday evening, and remaining until Monday morning. From that time, Edith, although but eight years old, cherished the idea of becoming a teacher, and when asked often in sport by her companions when she intended to begin to teach, she would invariably reply "as soon as ever I am eighteen." Her mother encouraged the idea, thinking it would stimulate her in her studies, and knowing the farm yielded but a small income, she thought it but right that her children should turn their talents to account. She did not dream, however, that Edith's hobby, to which she clung so pertinaciously, would carry her so far from home, and throw her, a pensioner, upon the kindness of strangers.

At the age of thirteen Edith entered the seminary, and in four years finished the course, graduating with honor, the youngest in her class.

The principal had been made aware of her intention to support herself by teaching, and offered her a vacancy in the school, saying that, if she preferred it at the end of the year, he would procure her a situation as governess in a family. She acquiesced, and entered upon her duties, discharging them faithfully. Grace, who was then fifteen, and a pupil in the institution, was her constant companion out of school hours. Her grandfather had died

during her last scholastic year, leaving the farm to her brother George, and a life annuity to her mother.

Edith was not obliged to maintain herself by teaching, but a spirit of independence, as well as a desire to be removed entirely from the society of one who, in spite of her, was acquiring a most unaccountable influence, determined her to leave home; when her brother would tell her long stories about shabbily treated governesses, and ask her why she wished to run the risk of being disagreeably situated, instead of being content to remain at the seminary, or of taking up with *other offers* at home, she would answer him laughingly, "Well, I am tired of the *Yankees*, and wish to know if governesses are really so maltreated as a class."

And so it was settled in all their minds that Edith's inevitable vocation was for teaching and governing, and there was no longer any struggling against it.

Mrs. Stanford was what is usually termed a "good woman;" Faithful in the discharge of her social and domestic duties, tho' careless in those appertaining to religion, if we accept a punctual attendance at mass on Sundays. Mr. Stanford had become a Catholic on his death-bed, and their long married life having been most happy, she thought a difference of religion no impediment to her daughter's union with Mr. Howard,—a union every way advantageous in a wordly point of view. In B—— there were but few Catholics of her own standing, and her entire circle of acquaintances was made up of Protestants, and those too who were in

their own way religious, many really spiritually minded. If her daughters were to wait for *Catholic* husbands their chances for matrimony would be poor indeed, and Edith, being a thorough going practical Catholic, could not fail to bring over eventually any one of a different faith whom, loved and loving, she might marry.

But Edith thought differently, as we have learned from her conversation with her mother; and rather than be constantly exposed to the fascinations, and oft repeated pleadings, of one, between whom and herself there existed not a complete union of sentiment,—one whose many attractions were in her view, no counterpoise to the heartlessness, and want of religious principle manifested in the one known passage of his life,—she would for a time separate herself from those the most dear, and in a fully occupied life, amongst strange scenes, cease to think of him, save as a kind and agreeable acquaintance. It was no common character that could thus turn aside from the allurements of wealth, and position, and lending but a deaf ear to the pleadings of her heart, enter deliberately into a way that might possibly be filled with brambles, and discover ruts, and inequalities, where she had been used to find a perfect level—But “the seal which marks our destiny has usually been stamped on our childhood; and most men as they look back to their early youth can remember the accident, the book, the conversation which gave the shape to their character, which events have subsequently developed.” Edith could remember the very day her seal was set—“I would

not wish *them* to be otherwise than practical Catholics, if I am not myself," said Mrs. Stanford to her husband one evening in allusion to her children.

"You remember what Montaigne says," he replied, "saying is quite a different thing from doing; the preaching and preacher must be considered apart.' I am afraid, my dear, you are but a wooden Catholic, and the children will not be long in discovering that the 'preaching and preacher' don't correspond—perhaps a little example joined to the precept would do better."

"True," replied her mother smiling, "but do you remember what somebody else says, I forget whom, that "vice and virtue should be independent of custom or example?" This applies equally to the practice of religion."

"Should be," certainly, but when and how often is it found so?

"I'll never be a wooden Catholic" resolved Edith who was an unobserved listener to the conversation, and she kept fealty to her resolution.

One afternoon, near the close of the Summer term, Edith received a message from Mr. Richards, the principal, requesting an interview with her in the parlor. He met her at the door, and inviting her in, desired her to be seated. "I have this morning received a letter from a gentleman in Georgia, applying to me for a governess," said he, "and I know of no person so well qualified to fill the situation as yourself. The gentleman states that he has two daughters, and he wishes a person competent to teach music, both vocal and instrumental,

French, and the English branches usually taught in our schools. He offers a reasonable salary, and will defray the traveling expenses of the young lady. I will submit this to your consideration, desiring you to return me an answer in the course of a week. I will merely add that, in the event of your declining the situation, I shall be but too happy to retain your services in this institution."

The answer was returned that week as desired, and was an acceptance, and the evening on which Edith is introduced to the reader is that prior to her departure.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEPARTURE.

THE sun was shining full on Edith's pillow the next morning, when she was awakened by her sister exclaiming, with forced gaiety, "Come, open your eyes, Edith, or has that sun shining right in your face made you blind?" and then giving her sister an affectionate kiss, she added, "While you are dressing, I will run down and give Vagabond his seed."

Edith sprang out of bed, and kneeling down, repeated her morning prayers. She then dressed herself for her journey, and descended to the breakfast-room, where she found her mother and George already seated at the table, and Grace standing before the bird-cage scolding "Vag," her pet canary, for not bathing himself properly.

The breakfast passed over quite cheerfully. Grace kept up a running conversation with her brother, asking questions, and answering herself when not replied to, while Mrs. Stanford and Edith conversed on general subjects; all, however, seeming to avoid the one subject uppermost in their minds, Edith's departure.

But now the carriage is at the door, and the trunk securely strapped to the back of it. Edith has bidden the servant good-by, and patted old Nero's head

for the last time; giving a last look at her grandfather's grave, as she seats herself in the carriage beside her mother, she observes that it is not in the shade of the old willow at all, and thinks, "That is quite right; no sorrow ever drooped so low over his spirits as to make them gloomy, and that marble, so bright and sunny, is but typical of his life."

As they roll away from the gate, Grace, who occupies the front seat with her brother George, turns to Edith, and, with a tear in her eye, remarks: "How lonely I shall be when I resume my studies next term, and have to travel this road alone every Monday morning!"

"You'll not go alone, I am sure," said George, "unless, contrary to your usual custom, you leave me at home, and drive the horse yourself."

"Oh, you'll go of course; but you know, brother, that you are not Edith."

"I am fully sensible of *that* fact," he replied, adding, with a spice of indignation in his tone, "If I *were* Edith, I don't think I should leave a happy home and loving friends for the pleasure of going among strangers to teach a few stupid ideas how to shoot."

"If you were constituted like me, George, you would do exactly as I do," said Edith, calmly.

"Now, George," interrupted Grace, "you need not say anything disagreeable to sister Edith. I, for my part, am viewing the matter in a cheerful light"—here the tears streamed down her cheeks; and a sob contradicted the assertion; but she continued: "I will have finished school when she re-

turns, and we will be at home with you and mother, and I think it will be perfectly delightful to have her tell us all about Southern life; and then the letters! You will write every week, won't you, sister? Your absence would be quite unendurable if it were not for those long letters you are to send. But I intend to make you regret as much as possible that you ever left home, for I am going deliberately to work to steal the hearts of all your beaux, and I intend to make Charles Howard my first conquest. It is such a pity," she continued, "that my hair has retained its 'pristine whiteness,' for I once heard him say that he could never fall in love with a 'light-haired baby-face.'"

"Oh, that does not matter," said Edith, laughing; "you can use 'Black Pomade like that you saw in Tant's room"—meaning the French teacher at the seminary.

"Better buy a wig at once," suggested George, looking affectionately on Grace's bright face, which was now all smiles, and doubting in his own mind if even Charles Howard could wish to change her vision-like style of beauty.

The conversation was kept up until they reached B——, Mrs. Stanford, however, taking no part in it, for she was very sad, and was not disposed to assume a gaiety which she did not feel. As soon as they came in sight of the depot Grace's smiles all vanished, and it was evident that she no longer viewed the matter in a cheerful light.

"Oh, Edith, dear, I wish you were going home with us instead of in those ugly cars. There! I

hear the whistle, and it goes straight through my head like a knife."

"You are nervous, Gracie," said her sister to her, aside, after they had entered the depot. "You must not give way to your feelings, but be cheerful, and not make mother more gloomy by your sad spirits. And when you are at home you must take my place and read to her, so that she will not miss me so much. I left "*Fabiola*" on the work-table, and you will find the mark in it where I left off. Read on just as if I were there, and always have some interesting book on hand that you can take up at any moment, for you know there is nothing dear mother likes so much as listening to us read aloud. But, come! dry up your tears, and be introduced to Mrs. Richards' brother. You know that he is going to Florida, and is to take charge of me as far as Augusta."

The introduction took place; and, leaving her sister and Mr. Acton together, Edith joined her mother and George, who stood in conversation with Mr. Richards. Just then some of Edith's young friends came running in with flushed faces, exclaiming; "Oh, Edith! we were so afraid we would be too late, but are just in time to say good-by."

And so it proved, for at that moment a voice sounded through the depot, "All aboard!" Hasty good-byes were exchanged, and a fervent "God bless you, my daughter!" from Mrs. Stanford, as she embraced her child, and bade her "write soon." Grace wept hysterically, and clung to her sister's neck, while Edith, though very pale, maintained

her calmness, and told Grace she must be "more of a woman." George manifested considerable emotion at thus parting for the first time with his sister, whom he dearly loved, but strove to hide it in unnecessary anxiety about her baggage. How well Edith remembered in after years her mother's voice and manner at that last parting! and she never forgot the strange, uncomfortable feeling which crept over her as, looking from the car window, she noticed that George and Grace stood full in the sunlight, while her mother, with her face veiled, was completely in the shade.

And now our young traveler is fairly started: and, bidding her, "God speed," we will leave her to pursue her journey, in the expectation of meeting her in different scenes, and surrounded by other faces.

CHAPTER IV.

BEECH BLUFF.

BEAUTIFULLY situated on a high bluff over-looking the Savannah River, about twelve miles from Augusta, is a plantation known as "Beech Bluff." This property belongs to Mr. Jacob Ellis, and is considered one of the finest in that section of the country.

After viewing those broad acres which every year yield an abundant harvest, those groves of chestnut and magnolia skirting the smooth green lawn which fronts the mansion and stretches far down the bluff, the eye of the beholder rests awhile on the spacious garden in the rear, which exhibits luxuriant foliage, shaded arbors, inviting one to linger in their cool retreat, and serpentine walks, bordered with those gorgeous southern flowers which in the splendor of their vesture, nature has made to outrival even the glory of Solomon.

The breeze from the river parts the foliage, revealing in the distance beyond the garden a number of low, white-washed cabins, which indicate the locality of the negro quarter; and still further on can be seen the cotton gin which is so indispensable on a Southern plantation, and for which planters are so much indebted to the mechanical genius of Eli Whitney. Beside it stands the cotton press,

which receives the soft, downy substance, and sends it forth in bales, ready for transportation.

"The house of Jacob hath indeed goodly possessions." So thinks Edith Stanford, as, standing at an upper window which commands an extensive view of the Bluff, she listens to Mr. Ellis as he gives her a history of the place from the time of his grandfather. She gazes out and admires the arrangement of the lawn and garden, and Mr. Ellis remarks, with a gratified smile, that all else he leaves to the care of his overseer, but the pleasure-grounds are his own particular charge.

"Papa, can't Uncle Anthony gear up, and take us to ride this morning?" asked Martha, the elder daughter, who, with her sister Mary, was standing beside her father.

"Not this morning, my dear; it is too warm, and besides I think Miss Edith would like to rest after her long journey. You can go down and show her the school-room and library. I dare say that Mary is anxious to introduce her to the books by this time: are you not, Mary?" said he, addressing a frail, delicate-looking girl, with large hazel eyes and short, thick brown curls. She smiled, and, blushing, drew closer to him, but made no reply.

At that moment a black woolly head made its appearance above the staircase, and a voice in the negro dialect asked for "Massa Jacob."

"Here, Josh," said his master. "What's wanting?"

"Uncle Sigh am in de garden, and wants to know about dem garden chairs."

"Tell him I'll be there directly."

The head disappeared in a trice, and Mr. Ellis prepared to follow, first telling Edith that he hoped she would make herself at home and become domesticated as soon as possible. "You will find Mary quite companionable when she throws off her mantle of shyness and reserve in which she usually wraps herself in the presence of strangers," said he; "but Matty is a sad fly-away; too restless to be anything but a nuisance." And, shaking his head with a smile, he, too, disappeared, and a moment after was seen in the garden engaged in conversation with an old colored man.

Left alone with the two girls, Edith soon set the ball of conversation in motion, and Martha's volubility kept it moving. Mary's shyness gradually wore off, though she did not become in the least degree familiar, for she was naturally of a reserved disposition. They went down to the library, and thence to the school-room adjoining, both apartments opening out upon a piazza overlooking the garden. Edith looked around the little room of which she was to be monarch for two years, and then glanced at her two subjects, one of whom, judging from appearances, she feared might prove rebellious, and offer open resistance to her authority if confined within bounds, or restrained of pleasure or liberty against her will. It did not require much discriminating wisdom to discover this, for "Wilful" was written in legible characters on the broad brow and in the quick glance of the restless blue eye, while "I will" spoke as plainly from the

erect, defiant position of the head as if the lips had uttered it.

"I hope we will get along amicably," thought Edith. And then, addressing the girls, she asked how they liked the idea of commencing their studies the following Monday.

"Let me see," said Mary. "That will be four days." And then, after a pause, she added: "Why, I am very glad, for we are obliged to stay in the house during the warmest part of the day, and I would just as soon study as do nothing at all."

"Doing nothing at all is not your style, Mary," said Martha, mimicking her sister's rather drawling tone, "for you are always poring over some stupid book or other, instead of amusing yourself in a sensible manner, as I do. Why don't you say that you shall like it very much? I am sure I shall"—here Mary bestowed upon her sister such a look of astonishment that she colored slightly, and, after hesitating a moment, added—"with Miss Edith for our teacher; you know I never could endure Miss Hannah." And then, turning to Edith, with a comical look of disgust at the remembrance, she continued: "She had the dyspepsia, and was always rushing up and down the room complaining of the 'change of diet,' and the acid in her stomach, if she had said the acid in her temper, I'd have liked it better, and believed her."

"You know, sister, that you used to torment Miss Hannah by sneezing just in the midst of your recitation," interrupted Mary.

"Yes; but how could I help it," replied Martha,

"when she took snuff, and would persist in looking over my book instead of her own, and shake her handkerchief in my face?"

"She never annoyed me in that way," mildly replied her sister.

"O no; because you were a little saint; you know you were; but I am sure she looked fierce enough at you one day for laughing when I sneezed so loud, that it made her jump, and she upset the inkstand over that *snuff* colored silk."

"Yes, Miss Edith," exclaimed Mary, with more animation than she had before exhibited, "and her best dress, too, poor thing! It was completely ruined. I was very sorry, but indeed I could not help laughing, for Matty looked so frightened, and Miss Hannah's position was so ludicrous peering over her spectacles first at Matty, then at me, and then at the ink which was dripping off the table on to her dress. She did not often put that dress on, but that day papa had some friends from Augusta, and she had dressed in the morning for dinner."

"Which she had no business to do," interrupted Martha; "I am sure mamma offered to replace the dress, but Miss Hannah '*scorned*' the idea;" though she did not scorn the fifty dollars which papa gave her in addition to her salary when she went away."

"How long since she left here?" Edith ventured to ask.

"Six months," replied Martha. "She stayed four months after mamma died, and then suddenly discovered that it was not proper (she was always talking about propriety) to live here, because papa

was a widower. As if any widower in the known world would look at her!"

"Hush, Matty!" said Mary; "papa would not like to hear you talk in that way."

"It's a fact, nevertheless," said Martha, elevating her eyebrows, and nodding her head significantly, "and you know Miss Hannah used to say that 'facts were stubborn things;' looking at me all the time as if she were staring a stubborn fact in the face."

"Well, you are stubborn sometimes, Matty; and Miss Hannah told papa——"

"Never you mind what that old dame told papa," interrupted Martha, evidently not wishing Edith to know; "she went away because she did not want to be sneezed at. The idea of my handsome papa going to church with her! ha, ha! Well," she continued, looking serious, "poor papa is a widower, and he misses dear mamma very much but he'll not put any one else in her place very quick, *I* know." Shrugging her shoulders, she looked at Edith as if to note the effect her words had upon her.

"For the first time, the thought of there being any impropriety in her position in the house, simply because the master of it was a widower, was suggested to Edith's mind, but she immediately repelled it, as indignantly, probably, as Miss Hannah had scorned the offer to replace her dress. "Perfectly absurd!" she said to herself; "to be sure I have been here but little more than twenty-four hours; but, judging from what I have seen of Mr.

Ellis, I think I am justified in believing that he would never draw any woman into any situation whatever that would compromise her in the least. He told me yesterday morning in the carriage, coming from Augusta, that he regretted that there was no one to receive me and dispense the hospitalities of his house but himself and the children; but it never occurred to me, when he added that his wife had been dead ten months, that there was any impropriety in a young lady taking up her residence here as governess. My only feeling was that of compassion for the poor motherless girls. I am sorry that Miss Martha has received this notion into her head, for I can plainly see that she will use it to advantage in case of provocation. However, I will not make myself uncomfortable in mind about it, for here I am, and here I must remain." With this wise conclusion, and her composure perfectly restored, she turned with the intention of going into the library, and just in time, as it proved, to catch the last act of the pantomime which had been going on at her back while she was lost in thought. Mary, with an indignant expression of countenance, was holding up her finger threateningly, and nodding her head in a significant manner towards the garden, where Mr. Ellis's voice could be heard in conversation with Uncle Sigh; while Martha, with an empty inkstand in her hand, was motioning as if in the act of throwing something on Edith's dress, her whole countenance lighted up with suppressed mirth, and her face contorted like a person's in the act of sneezing. Edith, quite as much amused

probably as Mary had been at a somewhat similar scene in the same room, between Martha and Miss Hannah, moved towards the library, saying, with an ill-concealed smile.

"Come, let us look at the books."

They passed into the adjoining room, and taking down a volume, Edith asked Mary what were her favorites.

"Scott is my favorite author, and I like Mrs. Hemans, too," she replied.

"And what books do you read?" she inquired, turning to Martha.

"Why, I think I like Robinson Crusoe as well as any book there; it is the only one I ever read, any way," said she, flourishing a dust brush, which Nelly the housemaid had carelessly left on the sofa.

"A contrast in taste, certainly!" thought Edith "Here is Mary, twelve years old, reading Scott and Hemans, while Miss Martha, two years her senior, is giving her undivided attention to Robinson Crusoe;" and, looking at the sisters, she thought the contrast in their appearance quite as great. Mary was reclining against the window-sill, the very embodiment of girlish grace and beauty, her small white hand half buried in her clustering curls, and her large expressive eyes following her sister's movements, while an amused smile hovered around her lips, parting them and displaying a set of small pearly teeth. The fairness of her complexion was enhanced by her black dress, cut low, exposing neck and shoulders of dazzling whiteness.

She blushed, as, looking up, she caught Edith's eye fastened upon her, and, changing her position, took a book from the table and slowly turned over the leaves.

Martha was standing in the centre of the room, looking threateningly at a huge fly on the ceiling, as if she meditated an application of the dust brush, and Edith, as she looked at her, asked involuntarily, "How much do you weigh?"

"One hundred and forty-seven; I was weighed yesterday at the cotton-gin," was the reply in an emphatic tone, as if the owner of so much flesh gloried in its possession.

"You weighed one hundred and fifty once," said Mary.

"Yes, when Miss Hannah first came here; but she shook three pounds off me."

"Why, sister!" exclaimed Mary in surprise, "Miss Hannah never shook you in her life."

"Shook her handkerchief in my face, and made me sneeze it off, which is all the same thing," said Martha, laconically. The sisters still wore mourning for their mother, and Martha had on a black dress which was far too short for a girl of her size, and put on so carelessly that her figure looked still more bulky. Her hair, of a reddish-brown color, was twisted up in a knot at the back of her head, and had evidently not been combed that day; her blue eyes were full of mischief, and her lips, always working restlessly, were large, though not badly shaped; her complexion was of that peculiar fairness which usually accompanies red or auburn

hair, but which freckles easily, and her face and neck were covered with these unsightly blemishes. Full of life and overflowing spirits, she had a keen relish for fun, which often induced her to play jokes on the negroes; but she was a favorite on the plantation notwithstanding, and any one of them would incur his master's displeasure rather than bring "young missus" into disgrace with her papa, by telling him the author of the mischief. She was naturally affectionate in disposition, and those whom she loved were never annoyed by her propensity to tease, when she found that it was really disagreeable; but she was ingenious in contrivances to torment those whom she did not particularly fancy, to which fact poor Miss Hannah could testify, and also Aunt Cilla the housekeeper. Possessing great penetration, she could discover at once the most tender spot in another's feelings, and proceed to apply her caustic touches where they would burn most deeply. After her mother's death Miss Hannah's unguarded remarks about remaining in the house with a widower, and openly expressed fears as to what the world would say, revealed to Martha her teacher's most vulnerable point, and afforded a brilliant opportunity for the exercise of her talent. With a great assumption of indignation at Uncle Anthony's, Uncle Sigh's, or some other colored uncle's impudence, she would rush in upon Miss Hannah when that good spinster was in one of her most quiet moods, and startle her with,

"Did you ever hear the like, Miss Hannah? Uncle Sigh says that you need not set your last new

black cap for papa, for it would not catch a crab, let alone a fine trout; and I just think I'll tell his master, for he oughtn't to be allowed to speak his mind so freely about the white folks."

At Miss Hannah's earnest supplication not to mention it to her papa, she would yield, with apparent unwillingness, however, saying that "the blacks had better be picking at their cotton instead of at Miss Hannah's yellow ribbons;" generally adding, by way of parenthesis, "Papa would settle them if he knew it," and then disappear as suddenly as she came, delighted at her success in "ruffling the old lady."

These daily repeated provocations at length had, to Martha, the desired effect; Miss Hannah could stand it no longer. In her credulity, believing that she was looked upon with suspicion by the negroes, whose opinion she had a great respect for, that of the house servants particularly, and more than half suspecting that Mr. Ellis imputed to her a less disinterested motive for remaining after his wife's death than solicitude for his children's welfare, she one day, in a fit of desperation after listening to a fresh bulletin from the negro quarter, burst into the library in a great state of excitement, and, much to Mr. Ellis's astonishment, commenced to vindicate herself, demanding at the same time "an explanation of the foul aspersions."

Mr. Ellis rose, and, offering her a chair, requested her to be seated. Overcome by his kind manner, she sank into the seat and burst into a flood of tears. Mr. Ellis paced up and down the room at a loss

to know what the unusual scene meant; his visitor becoming more calm, he seated himself on the sofa, and attentively listened to the whole story, which was related with considerable stammering on Miss Haunah's part, whose suspicions as to Mr. Ellis's opinion of her had given place to a womanly feeling of delicacy and considerable embarrassment on having to tell him that she was suspected by his servants of having matrimonial designs upon him.

Mr. Ellis could with difficulty refrain from laughing; but, assuming the most respectful and deferential manner, he assured her that it was nothing more than Martha's nonsense, which, though certainly very reprehensible, he hoped she would overlook and forget. Calling Martha, who looked the least bit in the world abashed by her father's stern look, he asked what she meant by disturbing Miss Hannah so often.

"It was all meant in fun, papa. Uncle Anthony told me one day when I was teasing him that he would put you up to marry Miss Hannah, and then I'd have a mother that would make me step around, and I just told Miss Hannah for fun, because she was always wondering what people would say to her staying here after mamma died, and I thought I'd just let her know what the black people said, any way."

Reprimanding Martha severely for her disrespect to her teacher, and for exaggerating, which she acknowledged that she did in repeating what had been said, her father sent her to her room in tears, for she loved him devotedly, and when she saw

that he was really offended her sorrow was deep, and prolific of a great many resolutions to amend, which, if they had been kept, would have effected a marvellous change in the wild, wilful girl. Miss Hannah soon after passed to her own room, and the subject was not again alluded to. Mr. Ellis showed neither by word nor look that he remembered the occurrence, but appeared not the least surprised when, the following week, Miss Hannah announced at the dinner-table her intended departure. A few days after, the carriage was at the door, and she was conveyed to Augusta, much to Martha's satisfaction, who complimented herself on her able generalship in putting her enemy to flight. She looked upon teachers in general, and governesses in particular, as avowed enemies to youth, and, as "all is fair in war," she felt that she had fairly gotten rid of her adversary.

The surprise of both the girls was very great when told by their father that another lady would soon arrive to take Miss Hannah's place. The information was received with pleasure by Mary, and Martha received it with a better grace than her father expected, and also his admonitions in regard to her conduct towards her future teacher. On Edith's arrival, Martha gazed in astonishment at her beauty, for she had expected to see a person after the order of Miss Hannah, and if Edith had come in any other capacity than that of school-ma'am, Martha, who had a taste for the beautiful, though she did not exercise it much in the arrangement of her toilet, would, without doubt, have re-

ceived her with open arms, as it was, she felt more friendly towards her, concluding that no one so pretty as Miss Edith could ever scold; of which fact she was convinced when Edith smiled so pleasantly at the pantomime scene instead of resenting the implied injury to her dress, as Miss Hannah would have done.

CHAPTER V.

MAGIC MEASURES.

EDITH and her pupils lingered in the library until dinner-time, looking over the books, and conversing; Edith gaining a great deal of information without asking any questions, for Martha was disposed to be communicative and needed no encouragement to continue; she would have given the whole family history had not Edith interrupted her when she found she was trespassing on delicate ground, by asking about their church.

"You know papa is an Episcopalian; but he generally goes with us to the Catholic church six miles from here, whenever there is mass, which only happens once a month. Mamma was a Catholic, and papa promised her that we should be brought up Catholics too. There is no Episcopal church nearer than Augusta. Let me see. Look here Mary" said she addressing her sister "is there mass next Sunday?"

I believe so. Yes, I know there is, for I heard papa tell Peter that Father Ward was coming home with us, and would visit the sick ones at the negro quarter in the evening.

"Can you ride horse-back, Miss Edith?" asked Martha with much interest; but without waiting for a reply, she added "because if you can't, why you'll have to learn right away, for there is only a foot-path to the church, and we cannot go in our

carriage without going two miles out of the way. But if you can't ride in the saddle I reckon you can ride behind papa, for all our horses tote double!"

"Edith, much amused, asked what she meant by tote double."

"Why carrying two, of course; didn't you ever see any one ride behind like a bag of meal coming from the mill?"

Edith confessed her ignorance of that mode of traveling, and Martha proceeded to explain.

"Why, if you ride behind papa, you will have the saddle blanket to sit on, and you will find it a very comfortable seat, if you don't tumble off; but you won't do that if you put your arm around papa, and hold on to his coat. That's the way I used to do before I had my horse. I've such a *splendid* horse, Miss Edith; his name is Selim, and he knows me as well as the green grass he eats. Don't he, Mary?"

"Your riding skirt is green, Matty, and I reckon that is the reason," said Mary, with the most innocent manner in the world, though Edith detected a smile lurking around the corners of her mouth.

"If that is the reason, you better keep out of his way," replied her sister, tartly, "for you look exactly like a blade of grass in your green skirt, and he might snap you up by mistake."

"Hal ha!" laughed out Nelly, who was setting things to rights. "You better not sed any t'ing, Miss Mary, for Miss Matty always comes out of an argument upside down."

"You mean right side up, Nelly," said Mary, laughing. "But mind your dusting, and don't disturb papa's book there, for you know he doesn't like his books and papers interfered with." And, as she moved the volume carefully to one side, Edith's eye caught the title of a poem, and she smiled as she said to herself: "no fear of the governess being treated shabbily by one having a taste for Tennyson."

The sight of the volume recalled to her mind the little reading circle around the work-table at home; and, repeating her mother's favorite poem, from the *Idyls of the Kings*, she left the library, in company with the girls, to obey the summons to dinner.

The dining-room, a long, narrow apartment, contained no furniture save the chairs and table and an old-fashioned sideboard with marble top and glass reflectors. The floor was covered with matting, and on the walls were hung a few pictures in heavy gilt frames. Aunt Cilla, a middle-aged negro woman, waited upon the table, and Josh, the black boy before alluded to, stood behind his master's chair, and, by means of a long string, kept in motion a covered frame or fan which was suspended to the ceiling, and served to keep off the flies.

Edith noticed Mr. Ellis more particularly than she had before done, and perceived for the first time the striking likeness between Mary and her father. "Then Martha must look like her mother," thought she, and, glancing at the young lady who, by right of seniority, occupied the seat at the head of the table, she wondered if the mother had been as

slovenly in appearance, and thinking, if so, the contrast must have been as great between the parents as in the daughters. Mr. Ellis was a tall, fine-looking man, with a head which phrenologists would have pronounced "intellectual," large hazel eyes like Mary's, and thick, wavy chestnut hair, which fell back from his broad, polished forehead without betraying a single thread of silver. His dress was neat, even to preciseness, and his manners were easy, conversing without effort. He did not seem to look upon Edith as a stranger, but asked questions about her journey, often anticipating her replies, and making comments as if she had just returned to Beech Bluff after a short absence, instead of having arrived only the day before a perfect stranger.

After the meal was finished, Mr. Ellis asked Edith if she had tried the piano.

"No, I have not," she replied; "we have spent the morning in the library."

"Will you do so now, and favor us with some music?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

And, rising from the table, they passed through the family sitting-room into a large, elegantly furnished apartment with windows, opening to the floor and commanding a view of the lawn. Opposite the door at which they entered was an immense fireplace with marble mantel, above which hung the portrait of a lady so much resembling Martha that Edith guessed it at once to be that of her mother. The centre-table was covered with elegantly bound

books and numerous expensive trifles, betokening a refined taste either in the master or mistress of the house—perhaps both.

Mr. Ellis opened the instrument, which stood in a recess between two doors—one leading into the library and the other into the school-room—and then seated himself at one of the windows. Mary knelt, on a low ottoman at his side, and leaned on the arm of his chair, while her sister commenced pacing slowly up and down the room, tracing out the pattern of the rich Brussels carpet with her foot, until arrested by her sister's rather impatient "Don't Matty! Please sit down!"

Running her fingers lightly over the keys, Edith commenced playing selections from a favorite opera. Martha was at her side in a moment, her face expressing the utmost delight; and when the music ceased eagerly begged for "something else." Edith continued to play piece after piece without turning round to note the effect upon her other listeners, for, indeed, she had almost forgotten their presence, so occupied was she with Martha, whose countenance varied with the expression of the music until Edith thought her positively beautiful. At length she ceased playing, and was about to rise from her seat, when Mary touched her lightly on the shoulder, and asked, in a timid voice, if she would not sing something. "O yes, do!" pleaded Martha, adding, in a low voice, "papa is so fond of vocal music!"

Playing a short prelude, she commenced a beautiful Scotch ballad, and as her clear, rich voice rang through the rooms, no other sound was audible

save the chirping of birds and insects; for, with the negro's characteristic love of music, the house-servants had suspended work, and were gathered in silent groups at the open doors and windows. Uncle Sigh had thrown down his pruning-hook at the first sound of the piano, and his dusky form leaned against the library door, hat in hand, and his gray woolly head bent forward, as if afraid of losing a single note.

No Prima Donna could possibly have felt more gratified at the repeated encores of a large audience, than did Edith at the effect of this simple ballad upon her hearers. Silence reigned even after the last note had died away, and was not broken until she rose to leave the instrument; and then, Martha—the untameable, harum-scarum, wild, wilful Martha—threw her arms around Edith's neck and burst into tears, exclaiming, "I can't help it, Miss Edith, indeed I can't for I am so sorry that I intended to be so disagreeable if you wouldn't let me have my own way. When I feel wicked, you will sing to me, won't you!"

Edith was taken completely by surprise at this unexpected reception of her song, and scarcely knew how to act. Mr. Ellis, seeing her embarrassment, stepped forward to relieve it, and placing his hand on his daughter's head, he said, smilingly, "Ah, Matty, I knew there was some good in you; I do not despair of your becoming civilized yet." And then turning to Edith, who had been pulled back upon the piano-stool by Martha's weight, and who blushed intensely as his eye rested upon her

face, he continued, "Whose breast has mail to music proof? not Matty's certainly. Your 'magic measures' seem to have entered her soul, and I hope they will have an abiding influence."

"It seems to me," said Edith, "like a flash of sunshine dispelling the cloud of doubts and fears in which I was enveloped this morning, after listening to a portion of Miss Hannah's experience from the young ladies; I doubted my own strength and wisdom to govern rightly, and I feared the school-room might witness some unpleasant scenes, but Matty's *confession* of her hostile intentions and her penitence encourages me to believe that we will get along most amicably. What do *you* think, Matty?" said she, raising Martha's flushed face to her own, and imprinting a kiss upon her cheek.

"Why, I think I'll *try* to be very good."

"And when you are bad, honey, Miss Eden can punish you by not singing," interrupted Uncle Sigh, who had bowed himself into the room, and stood in the most deferential attitude before the group at the piano.

"Well, Sigh, how did you like the music?" said his master.

"Bery, fine, Massa Jacob, bery fine;" replied the old negro, with a succession of bows. "I tink it am sperior to Miss Hannah's playing wid one hand. Howsomever, I would like to ask Miss Eden if she can sing any camp meeting hymns, case I tink her voice am perticly calkilated for dat perticlar style ob music."

Mr. Ellis seemed very much inclined to laugh,

though he refrained from doing so out of respect to the old man's feelings, who obviously thought he had paid Edith a very great compliment.

"I play and sing a great deal of sacred music," said Edith, but "never having attended a camp-meeting, I am ignorant of the style you speak of."

"Den you is not a Methodist?"

"No, I am a Roman Catholic."

Evidently disappointed that Edith was not of his "persuasion," he thanked her—for what she did not know—and bowed himself out of the room; and a moment after, Aunt Cilla's voice was heard in no very gentle tones, chiding him for his "indignity in standing so long 'mong de white folks in de big room. I reckon Miss Eden'll sing agin fore she gwines home, but dat rose-bush you dug up and lef in de sun won't hold up it's head agin if it dies, dat's sartin;" to which Uncle Sigh made some rejoinder, and was answered in a still louder key, "camp-meetings am all bery well in der place, but don't you go to brung 'em in de house for to bodder young marster."

"Uncle Sigh and Aunt Cilla are both old house servants," said Mr. Ellis, in answer to Edith's questioning look, "and therefore privileged. Aunt Cilla was my nurse when I was a child, and though 'old marster' has been dead these ten years, she continues to call me 'young marster, and will do so when I am gray, if she live till then. She forgets that I am a few years older than when she used to protect me from the mischievous annoyances of the 'little darkies.'"

"Is she Uncle Sigh's wife?" asked Edith.

"Yes, and she thinks a heap of her old man; but the camp-meeting fever he gets occasionally annoys her excessively, for she is a member of the Catholic Church. But they are good, pious old negroes, both of them."

"Why are they called 'Uncle' and 'Aunt?'"

"It is a mark of respect to the old negroes on the place, as much as the 'Miss' in addressing you."

"I am becoming enlightened," said Edith, laughing. "The idea of your having any respect for your slaves is quite a new one to me."

"I suppose so," said Mr. Ellis, good-naturedly; "but I hope you will have a better opinion of Southern planters when you go home; I have no doubt you will acknowledge yourself a Northerner with Southern principles, unless you have come here to 'make a note' of the objectionable features of slavery for the purpose of writing a book, which I very much doubt, for you look too honest."

"Oh, if you are becoming suspicious of me," said Edith, laughing, "I had better travel home again as soon as possible. At all events, I must not ask any more questions on the subject. But do I *look* as if I could write a book? one that would settle the affairs of the nation?"

"Well, not particularly; I have not discovered any *blue stockings* yet," rejoined Mr. Ellis, jocosely; "but," he added, more seriously, "I have no doubt you would be as much missed if you were to leave us now, though you have been here so short a time,

as was Mr. Stillingfleet in his absence from the Blue Stocking Club, in the days of Dr. Johnson. How would you like to have Miss Edith run home without beginning school!" addressing his daughters.

"Oh, not at all," said Mary; "she has promised to read so many books with me, and besides, Matty wouldn't become civilized."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the sound of the tea-bell. After tea, Martha, who had been unusually quiet during the meal, proposed a walk in the garden.

"Take your flute along, papa, and play for us, please, on the Indian mound."

"Bring it from the library, then," said her father; and in a moment it was in his hand, and the two girls were running on, leaving their father and Edith to follow at their leisure.

"There is a remarkable echo on the mound Martha mentioned," said Mr. Ellis, as they proceeded slowly down the walk, "which, when I play my flute, has almost the effect of a duet, the players situated at a distance from each other. The mound is an artificial elevation, supposed to have been thrown up by the Indians during the skirmishes in the early part of the Revolution. Whether that particular spot was selected to make the echo answer a 'savage' purpose, I am unable to say, but think it very likely. It is a favorite resort of Martha's, who goes there for the purpose of exercising her lungs, I judge, for I often hear her send-

ing forth sounds very like an Indian war-whoop, which the distant hill faithfully returns."

"What was that?" asked Edith, starting suddenly, as a sound, not unlike the shriek of a locomotive, fell on her ear, twice in succession, though more distant the second time.

"It is confirmation strong of what I've been telling you," answered her companion, laughing heartily. "The young lady has reached the mound before us."

A few more steps brought them in sight of the spot; Mary had thrown herself on the grass, while Martha, having planted herself directly in the middle of the green knoll, was inflating her lungs preparatory to a repetition of the shriek, when she saw her father and Edith approaching; running down to meet them, she exclaimed eagerly, "Did you hear the echo? wasn't it splendid?"

Mr. Ellis played several familiar airs, and Edith was charmed with both the music and the echo.

"I am not surprised at Matty's fancy for the spot," said she, "for it is certainly very attractive; and such a delightful resting-place under the shade of this sycamore."

As they turned to leave the mound, she remarked that the flute was an agreeable accompaniment to the piano.

"Yes," said Mr. Ellis, "I used to accompany Mrs. Ellis when she played."

"Do the girls play?" asked Edith, thinking that she ought to have asked the question in the afternoon.

"Very little. Their mother gave them lessons, but they never liked to practise, and we did not urge them to it, though Martha has a decided talent for music, and possesses a fine voice. Miss Hannah was not at all musical, and since Mrs. Ellis's death, the piano has seldom been opened."

That night Edith laid her head on her pillow in thankfulness that her lines had been cast in such a pleasant place. Thoughts of home filled her mind; mother, brother, sister, and *friend*, each and all claimed their share of remembrance, and thinking of them she fell asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

CHESTNUT GROVE.

The very sooth of it is, that an ill habit has the force of an ill fate.—L. ESTRANGE.

THE next day was Saturday, and as Edith had been informed that Uncle Anthony was sent to the post-office every Saturday evening, she seated herself in the library directly after breakfast, for the purpose of writing letters home.

"O Miss Edith, Miss Edith!" exclaimed Mary and Martha in the same breath—running on to the piazza, and throwing open the window-shutter, "papa is going to Chestnut Grove instead of Uncle Anthony, and he says that we can go along. He is going directly after dinner, about four o'clock."

"Are you going in the carriage?" asked Edith.

"No ma'am, on horseback."

"But you know I never rode."

"I told papa," said Martha, "that you could not ride horseback—I mean that you never *did* ride—and he said you could take your first lesson to-day, and I am to ride one of the carriage-horses and let you have Selim, and Mary is going to ride behind papa."

"But I have no skirt," suggested Edith.

"Never mind that; nobody'll see us but Mr. Irving and the blacks; but you might wear mine, only it would be a mile too large for your waist, and Mary's is a yard too short for you."

Smiling at the "mile" and "yard," Edith, after thinking a moment, said—

"Perhaps I can alter the skirt of my traveling-dress."

"Is it tucked?" asked Martha.

"No," said Edith; "but it has a deep hem, and is turned in at the top."

"That'll do first-rate," said Martha; "I'll get it, and give it to Oak; *she'll* fix it." And running up stairs she brought the dress down; and, calling a girl who was sewing in the sitting-room, she handed it to her, saying—

"There, Oak, Miss Edith wants you to fix that dress for her to ride in."

"Yes, Oak," said Edith, "I would like you to let down the skirt, if you please."

"Der's a right smart turned in, Miss Eden, and I reckon the hem won't have to come out," said the girl, examining it.

"Very well," returned Edith; "let it down at the waist, then, and I guess it will do for this afternoon and to-morrow."

"Better keep it for ridin', Miss Eden, for you won't get anything as purty dis side 'Gusta; allers 'mired dark gray. Young missus and Miss Mary ort to have some black 'terial for der skirts, for dey looks wery funny a ridin' out wid black bodies and green skirts; but dey don't know, and Massa Jacob don't neber notice wimmen's fixin'a. I reckon I'll ax him to git some dis evenin';" and nodding her head with a "dat's so," she disappeared, leaving Edith alone.

The letters were finished before dinner-time, and going up to her room, Edith found her dress, finished and neatly pressed, lying on the bed. The young ladies' room adjoined hers, and she heard Mary expostulating in an earnest tone with her sister.

"Please don't wear that log cabin, Matty, for you look so ugly in it. Wear the white sun-bonnet."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," said her sister. "The white sun-bonnet is so small it shows all my hair."

"Well, can't you comb your hair? You haven't combed it since the last time we went to church, I am sure."

"Indeed, I combed it the day papa went to Augusta for Miss Edith."

"I saw Miss Edith look at your head yesterday," said Mary, "and I reckon she did not think it looked very neat."

"I suppose then that she'll begin at my head to civilize me; but what are you going to wear?"

"My garden-hat."

"You look just like a boy in it, with your short curls."

"Mamma used to like it, you know, and it is so comfortable. But here comes Nelly; won't you let her plait your hair, and tie on the black ribbons?"

"No, indeed; plaiting breaks the hair."

"I don't think it breaks it half as much as the hard knot you leave it tied in," said Mary.

"Come, Miss Matty," said Nelly, who entered just then to assist her young ladies in dressing,

"low me to comb up your har, and 'stonish de fo'ks wid a smooove head."

"I'll 'stonish you with something else," said her young mistress, "if you don't have my saddle blanket and riding-skirt ready. And tell Uncle Peter to put the martingale on Flash, or his head will be in my mouth all the way, and I don't like the flavor."

"What are you going to do with that album, Matty?" asked Mary.

"Why, my name has never been written in it since papa gave it to me, and I saw Miss Edith's portfolio, and she draws beautifully; and I'll just ask her—"

"O sister!" interrupted Mary; "let me write your name in it!"

"You! indeed I'll not! Miss Edith 'll do it with a flourish; she'll make an elegant parrot or something, and write my name on the side of it."

"Where is the post-office, Mary?" asked Edith, putting her head in at the door.

"On the store door," answered Martha.

"On the store door?" repeated Edith, interrogatively.

"Yes, ma'am; it's nothing but a letter-box. Mr. Irving keeps the store and 'tends to the mail. But I declare Mary, if there aren't the horses! and a mule! And the dinner bell hasn't rung! Here, you Nellie! run down and ask Aunt Cilla if she's going to send Josh along on the mule with the dinner."

"There's the bell now," said Mary.

"Uncle Peter was aforehand wid de beasts, case marster gin him half holiday to gwine over to Dudley's plantation to see his old 'oman, and I reckon he's in a hurry," said Nelly, as they went into the dining-room.

"Are you timid, Miss Edith?" asked Mr. Ellis, as Edith stood on the block ready to mount.

"I don't think I feel particularly courageous, but I presume we are not going in a gallop," answered Edith, smiling.

We will not! Matty will probably disappear as soon as she is in her saddle; but we will ride slowly, though you would find it much easier riding if you would let Selim strike into a pace, for he is a fine pacer," said Mr. Ellis, as he assisted Edith in the saddle. "Now seat yourself firmly, and take the bridle in this hand—between your fingers, so! Is your foot in the stirrup? No. There, all right so far. Here, Peter, lead Selim off a few steps to make room for Flash."

Seated on her horse, Edith looked around with a great degree of interest to see the others mount. Martha walked to the block in a manner so stately, and so out of character with her dress, that Edith laughed in spite of herself.

The long green skirt trailed on the ground behind, while the wearer held it up in front at a *fashionable* height, revealing the hem of her black dress, and displaying her well turned ankle in a manner that would have done credit to a city belle. Her arms and shoulders were shaded by a cape of white dimity, reaching to the waist, and tied at the

neck with black ribbons. The log-cabin sun-bonnet, which had so shocked her sister's pride, was of blue *beragé*, made with casings, into which were run pieces of pasteboard, bringing it far over the face and most effectually concealing the uncombed hair. In her hand she carried a switch, stripped of all its leaves, except a few at the end, which bobbed about as if nodding in recognition of the green skirt. Stepping upon the block, she adjusted the saddle-cloth, then, seizing the pommel of the saddle, she sprang into her seat with astonishing agility, considering her weight, and without farther ceremony than a wave of her hand, and "I'll wait for you at the Branch," she galloped down the lawn and was soon out of sight. Her father looked after her a moment, then mounting his own horse he rode to the block to take up Mary, who looked so exceedingly pretty in her little garden hat with its black ribbons, that Edith did not wonder at her preference for it though, to be sure, the short curls did give her somewhat of a boyish appearance. As she gathered up her long skirt with one tiny, white hand, Edith thought "What a lovely picture!" Seating herself behind her father, she threw one arm around him, and, peeping around at Edith, she said, with the usual blush, "This is such a nice broad seat."

Selim deserved all the enconiums his mistress bestowed upon him, for he was indeed a noble animal. Edith thought he displayed a great deal of sagacity in turning so cautiously, as if aware that he was carrying a timid rider, and as he followed

the slow steps of Uncle Peter down the lawn, she felt quite as safe as if she were walking. Holding the gate open, Uncle Peter touched his cap respectfully, saying, "Gib Selim de bridle when you get to de big road, Miss Edin, and don't 'tempt to guide him, for you might steer wrong, and he knows de way."

Mr. Ellis smiled, and said to Edith, "You ought to become an accomplished horse-woman, with so many to teach you."

"Yes," said Edith, "I ought to know *something* about riding; Matty gave me a lesson." And then she laughed as she recollected that a part of her instructions was to throw her arm around Mr. Ellis and hold on to his coat.

"We must not allow you to contract any bad habits in the beginning," said Mr. Ellis; "so you will permit me to commence at once to correct any that I notice. Firstly you bend forward too much; and, secondly, your muscles are too much on the strain; relax them, and hold yourself up, for, in your present position, if Selim were to stumble, you would be thrown over his head without any warning. And that would be an ill fate indeed. There, that is better!" said he, approvingly, as Edith drew back her shoulders and settled herself more comfortably in the saddle.

"You spoke of Selim being a fine pacer," said Edith. "I must acknowledge my ignorance of the term as applied to horses."

"Webster will tell you that pacing signifies lifting the feet on the same side together," returned

Mr. Ellis. "If you feel inclined to give him—I mean Selim, not Webster—a trial, just give your bridle a sudden jerk, and he will understand the signal."

Edith obeyed, and the horses paced along together in a manner which she thought much more agreeable than the tedious walk; and as her timidity gradually wore off she began to enjoy the ride.

"I hear horse's feet down the road," said Mary, "and I reckon Matty is coming back to meet us. Yes, there she is; I caught a glimpse of her white cape." And, in a moment, Matty galloped up to them, and, wheeling her horse, exclaimed—

"How dolefully slow you ride. But how nicely you sit, Miss Edith! Don't you think you could gallop with me, now?"

Edith declined, saying she thought that would do for another lesson.

"I've been waiting at the Branch fully ten minutes," said Martha, "and do you know, papa, that it is swollen from the rain last week, and we'll have to ford it?"

"What are you going to do, Martha?" asked Edith.

"Why, let our horses swim across," answered Martha. "I'll go in first, and you do just like me; drop your bridle, pull up your skirt, and pick up your feet in this way." And, suiting the action to the word, she made a perfect bunch of herself, and looked so comical with her feet upon the horse's neck, that the rest of the party laughed aloud.

The sound of running water notified them that

they were near the "Branch," and a turn in the road brought them to the side of it. "Come on!" said Martha, and her horse plunged in and crossed the narrow stream; laughing, she called from the other side, "Don't let Selim shake you off, Miss Edith, when he comes out!"

"I stand shivering on the brink and fear to launch away," said Edith to Mr. Ellis, who was waiting for her to arrange her skirt. He laughed, and, taking the bridle over his arm, said, "Are you ready?"—and before she had time to assent or object, the horses were bearing them over almost without perceptible motion.

"Well," said Edith, "I feel as if I had performed a wonderful feat; something in the 'grand and lofty tumbling' style."

"'Twas *first-rate*!" said Martha (that first-rate being with her the superlative degree of excellence). "You are a heap more sensible than Miss Hannah. Why, we never got her 't'other side of Jordan' while she was at the Bluff."

"Martha!" said her father, sternly.

And, coloring slightly, she gave the pasteboards a sudden jerk over her face, saying: "I'll meet you at the store." Waving her switch in a majestic manner, she brought it down on her horse's neck, and the log-cabin and green skirt were again in rapid motion.

The "store" was a low wooden building with a porch in front, but without any sign over the door or display of goods in the windows to indicate that it was a place of business. The broken panes of

glass and tumble-down fence gave the whole place a dilapidated appearance, and Edith thought the grove at the back of the house looked far more inviting than the crazy looking porch in which were sitting several men, all of whom arose and disappeared in the dark looking door when our party approached.

"Where's Matty? There's Flash with her skirt on the saddle," said Mary.

"Gone round to see Janett, Miss Mary," said a gentleman, stepping from the porch. Then, saluting, Mr. Ellis with a nod and "How do, Ellis?" he gave Edith an inquisitive look; and, at Mr Ellis's introduction, "Mr. Irving, Miss Stanford," bowed quite low, and lifting his head with a jerk, said: Happy to make your 'quaintance, ma'am. Right smart rain last week. 'Sist you to 'light ma'am?" Edith extended her hand; and grasping it in a business-like manner, he almost pulled her off the block; then, wheeling around so suddenly as to make the horse start, he addressed himself to Mr. Ellis: "Horses want water, Ellis? Yes? Here, you Jack, take horses to creek"—abbreviating his words and sentences as if life were too short to allow the use of pronouns and articles, and there was an absolute necessity for abridging all other words.

"What'll look at, Ellis?" said Mr. Irving, as they stood beside the counter in the not very cleanly looking store.

"I believe the young ladies wish some black material for riding skirts."

"Nice alapacas; nothing else to show. Best in

the 'ouse," replied Mr. Irving, elevating his eyebrows and striking the counter at every exclamation."

"That will do, Mr. Irving," said Martha, thrusting her pasteboards in a window near him. "Please cut off twelve yards, and don't forget the sewing-silk.

"Letters for you, Ellis, top the pile. Yes, Miss Matty, twelve yards."

Walking to a desk behind the door, Mr. Ellis took up the letters, and looking them over, put three in his pocket. Edith looked at them wistfully, but said to herself: "It is to soon; I'll not receive any for a week;" then, taking those she had written out of her pocket, she was about to hand them to Mr. Ellis, when Mary stepped to the door, and lifting the lid of a small wooden box that was nailed to it on the inside, she said, with a look of sly humor: "Put them in the office, Miss Edith."

The purchases were made, and stowed away in a small carpet-sack which was hung on the pommel of Martha's saddle. Edith was glad when they were once more in the fresh air, for the smell of tobacco which proceeded from a corner where the occupants of the porch had stationed themselves, affected her very unpleasantly. Crossing the yard, they were followed closely by Mr. Irving, who led Selim to the block himself; and while Edith put on her skirt he worked his fingers nervously, and the moment it was fastened, seized her hand, and with a jerk of his head, said, "Sist you to mount ma'am?" She had barely time to settle herself in the saddle,

and before her foot was in the stirrup, he grasped the bridle, and leading the horse off a few paces, stood, holding him by the bit, until the others were ready to start, when he let go with a flourish of his arm, and started back as if he expected Selim to go off like a rocket. As Edith bowed, in acknowledgment of his services, his manner and attitude reminded her forcibly of the ring master in a traveling circus she had visited when a child.

Tea was ready and waiting when they reached home, and they seated themselves around the table with spirits exhilarated, and appetites considerably sharpened by the ride. Mr. Ellis was particularly merry and agreeable, and Edith thought his animated countenance gave him quite a youthful appearance, and he looked scarcely old enough to be the father of those two tall girls. Lifting her plate, she passed it to him without looking down, until the girls both exclaimed, "Look under your plate, Miss Edith, under your plate!" She colored with surprise and pleasure as she took up a letter, and, looking at Mr. Ellis suspiciously, said, "Where did this come from? It must have been written the day after I left home." He laughed heartily, as if he enjoyed her surprise, and said, "You must excuse me for not handing it to you before, but I knew you would like to be alone when you read it, and I feared your anxiety to learn the contents would prevent your enjoying the ride home."

Immediately after tea, Edith went to her room. "Dear Gracy," said she, unfolding her letter, "I would know your graceful handwriting among a

score of others," And then she read how poor Grace, sad, lonely, and out of sorts, had gone to her sister's room the evening after her departure, and, after a fit of weeping, had concluded to write and tell her that George was very grum, mamma terribly low-spirited, and the whole house so desolate that it was quite unbearable. Then came a long string of fond wishes for dear Edie's happiness, followed by as many resolutions to look upon the bright side of life—and the letter closed with a quotation, beginning, "Away with melancholy," and many assurances of sisterly affection. "Bless her dear heart," said Edith, returning it to the envelope. "I hope the next letter will be a more cheerful one;" and though she felt grieved at the sadness of her mother and her brother's grumness, which she knew so well how to interpret, she was happy at having heard from the dear ones at home.

CHAPTER VII.

SABBATH IN THE COUNTRY.

The heaven, the air, the earth, and boundless sea
Make but one temple for the Deity.—WALLER.

NINE o'clock the following morning found Mr. Ellis and his family starting on their Sabbath day's journey. It was an extremely warm September day, but the breeze from the river whose shining waters were visible through the trees, and the shaded path which they traveled, prevented them from feeling the heat very sensibly. They went at a moderate pace, befitting the holiness of the day, but, as the horses could not go abreast, there was no opportunity for conversation. The path was a crooked one, and every turn brought to their view others traveling the same narrow road; and as Edith watched them "on their winding way," she thought, if they were spending the time in serious meditation, their minds must be well prepared to enter upon the worship of God in spirit and in truth.

The air was filled with the song of birds, and their notes had never seemed to her so prolonged or so melodious, and as she listened to the sweet music, it conveyed to her mind the meaning of "linked sweetness long drawn out." She was one eminently calculated to enjoy such sights and sounds as greeted her eye and ear, for everything in Nature had a charm for her. From the tiny, half-hidden spring

flower, to the majestic plants and towering trees; the timid, feeble sparrow flying low to the earth, and the bold eagle skimming the blue ether; the rocks, over which dash the roaring cataracts, and the smooth pebble, washed by the rippling stream; each read to her its own peculiar lesson, and this quiet Sabbath morning, as she rode slowly through those grand old woods, drinking in the music of birds and perfume of flowers, she wondered that any person endowed with sight and hearing could disbelieve in "God the Father Almighty."

The church was "set on a hill" in the woods, and was a rude building, with a door at each side, but without windows; there was an open space in front, and adjoining it at the back a temporary shelter had been erected for the accommodation of unusually large congregations, in hot weather. As they approached it, Edith thought the whole place had more the appearance of a gypsy-camp than a place of worship. Horses were standing under the trees, and on the branches above them were hung different colored saddle-blankets and riding-skirts, and on the grass lolled negro men and woman, dressed in gay holiday attire, and little black children, with their heads tied up in yellow bandannas, scampered about almost under the horses' feet.

Parties were approaching from every direction, and at each fresh arrival, servants recognizing their master's family, jumped from the grass and stationed themselves at the horses' heads, while gentlemen stepped from the group assembled at the door, and assisted the ladies to dismount.

Uncle Sigh, Uncle Peter, and Josh took hold of the bridles when the horses halted, and Nellie and Oak stood ready to take the riding-skirts. A gentleman standing a little apart from the group before the church wheeled suddenly and started towards our party, and before he reached them Edith recognized Mr. Irving. "What a nuisance!" she involuntarily exclaimed. Mr. Ellis caught the expression, and speaking quickly to Uncle Sigh, said, "Take Miss Mary off so that I can dismount;" but before that could be accomplished, Mr. Irving had hold of Edith's hand, and was dragging her from the saddle in the most awkward manner. There was no block to step on, and as she attempted to spring to the ground, her foot caught in her skirt, and she fell forward, and was clasped in Mr. Irving's long arms; before she could recover her balance, he released her suddenly, and started back, and she fell headlong to the ground. Her feet were so entangled in her skirt that it was with difficulty she arose, even with Mr. Ellis's assistance, and then he was obliged to support her while Nellie pulled her skirt from under her feet. She could have cried with vexation, and the hot blood mounted to her face as she saw the author of the mischief walk rapidly towards the church as if he expected chastisement if he lingered. She did not wonder at his abrupt departure, when, glancing at Mr. Ellis's face, she saw the angry flush on his brow, and the indignant flash of his eye as it followed the retreating figure of the discomfited merchant. It was no longer the calm, deliberate gentleman, with gentle,

winning manners, who stood before her, but the impulsive passionate man; and as he almost hissed out "Dolt! blockhead! idiot!" she thought he displayed rather more anger than the occasion warranted, since Mr Irving's *intentions* had been kind; her own resentment subsided, and she said in a pleasant tone—

"It was mostly my own fault, Mr. Ellis; you know I am not accustomed to such long skirts."

"Nor such long arms either, I imagine!" he replied, his eyes still flashing. Her face became scarlet. "But I have not inquired if you are hurt?"

"I believe I have sustained no injury," said she, brushing some dirt from her sleeve. The words were scarcely out before she uttered an exclamation, as if attacked by sudden pain.

"What's the matter, Miss Edith?" said Mary.

"A pain in my ankle," said she, limping, as she attempted to walk; "I must have turned it; but it's nothing of consequence, I fancy," and dropping her veil, she signified that she was ready to proceed to the church.

"You are sure it is not sprained?" said Mr. Ellis, with extreme solicitude.

"O no; the pain has gone already," she returned, smiling; and they walked on, but the compression of her lips, every time she stepped with the right foot, told that she was suffering, though she would not acknowledge that it was anything but "slight, very slight pain."

The church was filled and mass had commenced

when they entered. Edith and the two girls sat down near the door, and Mr. Ellis crossed the room, and seated himself opposite to them.

At the close of the mass Edith requested the girls to remain in their seats a few moments, for she thought she should certainly fall if she attempted to go out with the crowd; but she almost regretted having done so, for so many of their friends stopped to speak with them, and to inquire if their teacher was hurt when she fell from her horse. Mr. Ellis joined them as soon as possible, and, introducing "Father Ward," immediately inquired if she still felt the pain."

"Yes, I feel it most acutely at present," she replied, "and I fear it is more serious than I at first apprehended."

"Will you allow me to look at it? I am the surgeon on my plantation," he said, with a grave smile.

She lifted her foot without hesitation, and placed it on the bench before her. He examined it and said, with a troubled look: "It is, indeed an ugly sprain. Your boot must come off, and a handkerchief must be bound tightly around your foot." Taking a penknife from his pocket, he slit the gaiter down on the out-side and drew it off as gently as possible; though Edith did not shrink or groan her pale face, and white compressed lips, betrayed how much she suffered. Mr. Ellis bound his own handkerchief tightly around the swollen member, while Martha called Oak and desired her to fetch a

glass of water, and Mary stood looking on with the most distressed face imaginable.

"Do you think you can sit on your horse?" asked Mr. Ellis taking the glass from Oak and handing it to Edith.

"Yes, I think so," she replied, tho' her voice faltered "but can not we go into that back building? I don't like this confusion, right here, in the very Presence."

At that moment Father Ward entered, and to him Mr. Ellis communicated Edith's scruples. "Make yourself easy on that point my child, the Blessed Sacrament is removed; fortunately (turning to Mr. Ellis) Mr. Irving has his gig here and offers it to you, and will ride your horse home; you had better take it, for Miss Stanford will never reach home on horseback with that swollen foot, my word for it, she'll faint as sure as you're born.

"There! you see how kind he is for all—he is only unfortunate in being a little awkward," said Edith exultingly to Mr. Ellis.

"True, but I have so little patience with his officious awkwardness—However I accept the offer of his gig most gratefully." And the cloud disappeared from his brow, which had gathered there at the mention of Irving's name, "But Mr. Ward you'll have to take charge of my daughters."

"I'll do that with pleasure; we'll take the bridle path and meet you at the bridge."

"Scarcely, I think," said Mr. Ellis smiling, "as I'm not going that way."

"Not by the road, certainly," said Father Ward.

in surprise, "Why it's one o'clock and the sun is powerful hot, she'll faint so sure—" The last of the sentence was lost, as he disappeared out of the door in search of Mr. Irving to convey to him the expression of Mr. Ellis' thanks, and acceptance of his vehicle.

Edith looked after him and smiled in spite of her suffering.

"What a joyous spirit he seems to possess."

"He does indeed; if ever any one 'served the Lord in joy and gladness,' he does. His manners are rather abrupt and unpolished, but he is one of the most effective, earnest preachers I have ever listened to. Some of my Protestant friends, who have no church privileges of their own, nearer than Augusta, make it a point always to come here on the regular Sunday for mass, principally because Mr. Ward is well-known and popular, and Protestants in this section are not prejudiced. I have seen those whom I knew to listen with the most stoical indifference to the more studied sermons of their own grave ministers, sit in wrapt attention, and betray very visible emotion during his lectures, or mission sermons; when, after a stirring appeal to the impenitent or lukewarm, he has modulated his voice, and echoed in most winning tones the Saviour's promises of pardon and love, I have been reminded of Paul in his tempestuous journey to Rome "who when all hope that they should be saved was taken away," stood forth in the midst of his trembling companions and said, "I exhort you

to be of good cheer; for I believe God it shall so be even as it has been told me."

Mr. Ellis was walking slowly up and down before Edith, waiting for the horses to be brought to the door, and while he spoke, his usually grave face wore an almost sad expression, as if other thoughts had been suggested to his mind; and it was even so, as Edith afterwards learned.

"De gig am ready, massa," said Uncle Peter, stepping to the door, with his hat off, "Misser Irving took your hoss, and gwined home; but Misser War' kep de saddle-blanket for to make a pillar for Miss Eden's foot."

"I am obliged to Father Ward for his thoughtfulness," said Edith, with a grateful smile. "The blanket, with my riding-skirt, will support my foot nicely."

"Drive the gig to the door, Peter," said his master, "and tell Sigh to have Selim ready for Miss Martha. Oak will ride Miss Edith's horse, unless you wish to ride in the saddle, Mary"—turning to his daughter, who stood beside Edith.

"I would rather ride behind Matty," she answered, with a doubtful glance towards her sister.

"Indeed, Mary, it is entirely too warm! I'd as soon be a pedler at once, and carry a pack on my back! If you can't be sensible, and ride Flash, you'll have to ride behind Mr. Ward," Seeing Mary's look of distress, she turned to Edith with a merry twinkle in her eye, and added, *sotto voce*, "She'll faint, as sure as you're born."

"I'll ride Flash, I reckon," said Mary to her father, seeing no alternative.

"Very well," he answered; "but mind and keep him in the path. Don't drop your bridle," said he, with a meaning smile, as he went out to the gig, which at that moment appeared before the door.

"Are you afraid to ride by yourself?" asked Edith of Mary,

"O no!" she answered, laughing, as if she thought it quite ridiculous to be afraid.

"It's just laziness, Miss Edith and nothing else," said Martha. "Papa told her not to drop her bridle, because the last time she rode Flash she dropped it, and let him go into the woods, and when we looked around she was away off behind some trees."

"I was not lazy," Mary said in a gentle voice, but coloring; "I only forgot where I was. I was trying to repeat some of the 'Lady of the Lake', and shut my eyes; and before I knew it Flash was out of the path."

"Yes, and a nice 'Lady of the Lake,' you'd have been if he had gone to the Branch," said Martha.

"Now, Miss Edith, we must lift you into the gig," said Mr. Ellis, coming in. "You are getting a little better color. Is your ankle easier?"

"Yes, in this position," she replied, with a distressed look, as if she dreaded to have it moved.

"I am sorry to disturb it; but trust me! I'll lift you as gently as possible. You do not look very heavy"—glancing at her slight figure, and smiling. "I think I can convey you to the gig without much

difficulty." And, taking her in his strong arms, he carried her out with as much ease as if she had been a child. The color fled from her face, leaving it almost marble-white, and when he placed her on the seat of the gig, such a look of suffering was depicted there that Mary exclaimed, with the tears running down her cheeks, "Oh, papa! isn't it dreadful!" Many persons came forward with offers of assistance and expressions of sympathy, while others stood apart, watching the proceedings with interest. Poor Edith! she was not conscious of anything but the throbbing, excruciating pain in her foot and ankle, and only heard Mr. Ellis give some directions to Uncle Sigh about the young ladies' horses, and had a vague sort of feeling that he was adjusting the articles under her foot, and raising it by placing something underneath; then the top of the gig was pulled over, and Mr. Ellis seated himself beside her, and they slowly rolled away. No words were exchanged until the jolting, unsteady motion had ceased, and they were moving rapidly over a smooth road.

"How does your foot feel now?" asked Mr. Ellis.

"Somewhat easier, though still very painful," replied Edith. And then, with a faint smile, she added: "My attention is divided between my foot and head; the one seems striving to outpain the other."

"Perhaps, if you were to take off your bonnet, your head would be somewhat relieved of the pain; you have had it on since morning," said Mr. Ellis, kindly.

Edith untied the strings, and removed the heavy straw bonnet; and, with womanly thoughtfulness, her companion loosened the veil, and, throwing it over her head, said it would be a protection from the dust.

"What time is it?" asked Edith.

Looking at his watch, Mr. Ellis replied that it was two o'clock. "We shall reach home about three," said he. And then, pointing towards the west with his whip, he said: "The Bluff lies in that direction. We seem to be leaving it, but in order to reach home by this road we are obliged to go three miles in this direction; then the road forks, and brings us on to the one leading to the Bluff."

"Father Ward mentioned a road by the bridge. Is that a shorter route than this?" asked Edith, striving to keep up the conversation.

"Yes, and much more shady" replied Mr. Ellis, "which was probably the reason that Mr. Ward was so surprised at my not taking it; but it is hardly fit to travel in a covered vehicle, as in many places the branches hang low, and interrupt the way; and it is very rough, which is another objection, as the jolting would have been intolerable to you."

"I suppose the girls will arrive home before us," said Edith, after a pause.

"Yes; half an hour or so," returned Mr. Ellis.

"I regret this accident so much on their account; it is so unfortunate, for I suppose I'll not be able to enter the school room for a week," she said, in a

despondent tone. And then, as if a happy thought had relieved her mind of a load of anxiety, she added, with a brighter look: "But that need not prevent their studying, for I can attend to them in my room; they can bring their books there."

"As many books from the library as you please to order," said Mr. Ellis, with a pleasant smile, "but none from the school-room. You are to be my pupil for a fortnight or thereabouts, and learn resignation; I fear you are lacking in that cardinal virtue."

"A fortnight!" exclaimed Edith in dismay. "This will certainly not confine me to my room a fortnight."

"Not necessarily to your room; you can be carried to any part of the house you choose; but I fear you will not be able to use your foot for some time, as the delay that has occurred in applying the proper remedies will undoubtedly aggravate the swelling and inflammation. 'But I exhort you to be of good cheer,' " said Mr. Ellis, turning to her with a quiet smile, as he repeated the words of scripture he had before quoted, in speaking of Father Ward. This led Edith's thoughts into another channel, and she asked if there were many Catholics among the black people at the Bluff.

"Yes," replied her companion. "Mr. Ward has made several converts among my people, and is always welcomed even by the most lawless of them, and listened to with the most profound attention."

"He is one, I judge, calculated to make an impression on the negro mind," said Edith, and con-

tinued, "he strikes me as being not remarkably profound, and yet possessing, if I may so call it, a sort of magnetism by which he gains an influence where profound reasoning would be unappreciated, wholly lost."

"You have penetration, I perceive," returned Mr. Ellis, smiling approvingly.

"Not in a remarkable degree, I think; but in going back to the sermon of to-day, I remember very little of it, save the Beatitudes which he repeated, and yet every word inspired me with the deepest devotion in spite of my throbbing, paining ankle, and I felt that I could give up every thing and consecrate myself wholly to the service of our blessed Lord."

"And there are few of his audience who do not feel the same," returned Mr. Ellis, "and I think the operative cause is his own earnestness, and ardor—and *love*. Love not only to God but to the whole human family. The sway he obtains over his congregation is to me a sort of electrical phenomena which I unfold thus. Every word he utters comes from his heart of hearts, and is heavy with the weight of his own passionate zeal, his burning love for souls; something of this holy fire is communicated to his hearers; each individual soul feels itself to be the particular one he is striving to gain for heaven—and becomes inflamed with a desire to *merit* the great efforts, perhaps sacrifices, it doubts not he would make to ensure its salvation; naturally the mind is led to a contemplation of the great love—the cruel agony and bitter passion, of its true

Saviour, whose sufferings on the cross were endured to ransom that same listening soul, which is seized with extreme contrition for its unworthiness, desire for holiness and a sense of disgust for whatever in life serves to draw it from the direct way to the possession and enjoyment of His divine favor. Thus, where men of deep erudition, great powers of reasoning would have preached to weary brains and dull ears, Mr. Ward, by the power of his eager, loving, tender nature, his Christ-like yearning for souls, holds the brain, and ear, and heart enthralled as if by a spell."

"You surprise me, not being a Catholic."

"As far as Confirmation and Baptism in the Episcopal church go, I am an Episcopalian, though I have been so long removed from, I might say, contact with the Church, that I don't suppose I am entitled to the name; this section is principally settled by Methodists and Baptists, the latter being divided into free-will and close-unionists. Their mode of worship never had any attraction for me, and until the building erected for the accommodation of the few Catholics hereabouts offered something better in the way of sermons, Mrs. Ellis and I passed our Sundays at home."

"I think Martha said that her mother was a Roman Catholic."

"She became one, just before her death, and though there are many things I cannot subscribe to in your religion, yet I owe Mr. Ward a debt of gratitude for converting my wife, since she received such comfort and consolation from the sacraments."

The children were baptized at their mother's death-bed; it was her last request."

"It must have grieved her to see you without the pale;" Edith ventured to say.

"Not in the least; she had perfect faith in God's grace, only asking that I should give the subject my attention, and I have; but the gift of faith is withheld. If it be good for me why is it not bestowed?"

"It cannot fail to come, when your disposition to receive it is so good," rejoined Edith with a look of confidence.

"I have been somewhat surprised that Mr. Ward has never approached me on the subject."

"The church never forces itself," replied Edith. "Father Ward is waiting for the broaching to come from you, and in the meantime is giving you both prayers and masses, I doubt not."

"Prayers and masses have not been wanting, and in the very holy sepulchre my name has been uttered. I am not uninformed, for I have read much. I admire the complete unity and harmony in the Catholic church, and lament the want of it in the Episcopal; this has, perhaps, more than anything else, alienated me from the church of my fathers, in which the chief cause of dispute and separation has been the sacraments. First the storm of controversy chiefly raged around the doctrine of the Lord's supper, some contending for the old Church of Rome view of the communion, and others protesting against its use in any Romish sense. Finally, it was fixed at a Protestant stan-

dard, then the contest became hot over the Baptismal service. The ablest writers of the Anglican church interpreted it in contradictory senses, especially the article on Justification. Then comes the question of Regeneration, and it was found that in the Baptismal service for infants lay the whole error; a most discreditable misunderstanding as to the true meaning of this service as laid down in the Prayer-book deranged their whole theology, and totally obscured the way of salvation. A great number of theories have been propounded, and each contended for as the true theory, and the *only* true one, to the great scandal and amazement of all the others; and so they have gone on disputing over the sacraments until peace is a stranger to the church, and the disputants are lost in a fog through which they can scarcely see each other. The aim of the one party seems to be to reject every thing possible to be interpreted in a Romish sense, no matter how much its truth may appeal to their reasoning or belief, and in its antipathy to the Catholic Church to remove itself as far from it as possible by a revision of the prayer book, the Romish origin of which makes it particularly offensive, though it has come down to them from the first spiritual heads of their church; Queen Elizabeth for one, whom now, ingrates that they are, they denounce as an "arbitrary and *unregenerate* Queen" a "*half-reformed* and wilful woman." The other party having great faith in fat salaries, good "livings" and clerical domestic bliss, yet entertains a lively interest, we might say faith in the

efficacy of "Romish practices," and therefore while with the one hand it clings to *the benefices* and privileges of the Protestant church, endeavors to keep near enough to Rome to hold on (excuse me, no disrespect is meant) to its coat-skirts with the other "

Edith laughed heartily, saying that she could not understand that he should call himself an Episcopalian at all.

"There are many Episcopalians, far better than I, whose religious convictions and experiences find expression in the thirty-nine Articles, and in the offices as interpreted in harmony with the articles, who are equally with myself disgusted with the inharmonious wrangling which promises to be transmitted from generation to generation," returned Mr. Ellis.

"I am so much interested to know how Mrs. Ellis' conversion was brought about," said Edith after a pause.

"I may say it was brought about by the illness and death of Aunt Cilla's little boy. Aunt Cilla had become a convert under Mr. Ward's preaching, at a mission that took place just after the little Church was opened; her child was taken ill soon after, and she begged permission to send for Mr. Ward who was in the neighborhood at that time, to come and baptize the boy; Mrs. Ellis was in delicate health, and had been much depressed in spirits; Mr. Ward was necessitated to remain over night, and we all, but Mrs. Ellis in particular, found him most agreeable and entertaining. He seemed to communicate

something of his own joyousness to us, and the evening passed delightfully; the following morning Mrs. Ellis drew him into a conversation on religion, during which she laughingly, but very frankly said that she had always experienced a desire for sacramental confession; she supposed she could confess to me or to Uncle Sigh, but that would not be orthodox, she added in a jesting way. Before he left she asked him if he would not furnish her with some books when he came again, taking it for granted that he would repeat his visit. She excused the request by saying that she was ashamed of her ignorance on Catholic doctrines when he seemed so perfectly informed on those of the different Protestant denominations; she really wanted to be enlightened. I could see that notwithstanding her half joking manner she was quite serious, and as his visit seemed to afford her so much pleasure, I urged him to repeat it. He did so, and often. Frequently when reading the Catholic works he supplied her with, she would exclaim "Why Jacob the views given here are precisely those I have held for a long time, only I did not know they were Catholic; I have been accusing myself of being heterodox in holding opinions contrary to my early teachings, but I find I am strictly orthodox after all—Here they are laid down as Catholic doctrine: neither you or I knew you had a papist wife, did we?" This would all be said in a light bantering way, but I saw she was more cheerful; with every visit of Mr. Ward, the depression seemed to be removed in a great degree, and at length she told me with the greatest

apparent happiness that she was really and truly a Catholic, and desired to be received into the church. The following Sunday was Mr. Ward's regular visitation, and she was baptised before Mass. The next day was the Feast of the Assumption, and Mr. Ward remained and celebrated the feast for the first time in the new church. My wife went to communion, and I may truly say, that I never saw such an expression of perfect peace and happiness as her face wore when she returned from the altar—I would give much to possess what her countenance expressed. Returning home she remarked to me that her happiness would have been complete had I knelt beside her at the altar—"To think of my long indifference, my mental, no spiritual indolence! I think, husband, that I should have been a better wife had I been a Catholic;" then she alluded most feelingly to some of her little infirmities, such as irritability which had arisen entirely from the ill state of her health. While she was speaking her horse stumbled, and being a careless rider she slipped from the saddle and fell to the ground, her foot remaining in the stirrup, and her head striking against a stone. Mr. Ward, who was returning with us, assisted me in raising her, and brought water from a brook near at hand, with which we bathed her head, and, after binding up the wound, which was the only external injury she received, save a slight bruise on her shoulder, she was able to sit on her horse, and proceed home. Two days after, she was taken suddenly violently ill, and died in a few hours."

This had all been said in a manner very quiet and deliberate, but there was an inexpressible sadness in his tone, and on his face there was that look of melancholy which in his gay moments Edith had noticed suddenly settle over it, chasing away the brightness which a moment before had lent an additional charm to his strikingly handsome countenance.

Edith made no remark, for, though interesting to her, she did not wish to continue a subject evidently painful to her companion. After a moment's silence, however, he continued, as if thinking aloud. "A singular coincidence! Ten months ago to-day she met with the accident." A pause; and then, as if the events separated by an interval of ten months were associated together in his mind, he looked at Edith, and said: "But yours is slight comparatively."

"Nothing at all!" she rejoined, quickly, with a perceptible shudder, as the thought passed through her mind that it *might* have been fatal.

He noticed the shudder; and, divining the cause, he changed the subject by asking, "Did you enjoy the ride to church, Miss Edith?"

"Very much," she replied; "it was such a lovely morning!" Then, glancing at her foot propped up before her, she said, with a sigh: "life is like an April day—clouds and sunshine!"

"Yes, it is so with every one," said her companion; "and it is well that we have the contrast of shade occasionally, for the sun would lose half its genial warmth, and its benign influence would not be ap-

preciated, if we were to bask in its light continually."

"True, but I would not like a similar shadow," nodding towards her foot, "to fall across my path frequently."

"It would not be very agreeable, certainly," returned Mr. Ellis.

There was silence for some time. At length Mr. Ellis pointed toward what seemed to Edith a grove, and said, "Do you see the house yonder, through the trees? We will be there presently;" and touching the horse with his whip, they rode on a little faster.

Uncle Anthony and Sigh met the gig at the gate and followed it up the lawn. Martha, Mary, and Mr. Ward stood on the piazza, and at the sound of wheels Aunt Cilla and the other house-servants came running out, all with anxious faces; but on the old housekeeper's countenance there was a dismal, funereal expression, as if she were watching the approach of a funeral cortege.

"Leave me take her out, Massa!" she said, as soon as Mr. Ellis threw the reins to Uncle Peter. "Poor chile! Better be took right up stars and put to bed. What for you do dat any way?" she exclaimed, turning to Edith with a look of mingled sorrow and vexation.

"I'll carry Miss Edith up stairs. Is her room ready? Stand one side, Cilla."

"Yes, Massa, and a big dish ob lye to souse her foot in. De bery bes' ting in the worl' for sprain. Tried it once when you's away from hum, Massa,

when my ole man sprain him ankle, and was laid up for four weeks wid de 'flamation."

"I judge that Miss Stanford would be laid up fully that length of time under similar treatment," said Mr. Ward, with perfect gravity; "but I think your master will use cold water applications."

"Cole water, Misser War! Gib de chile cole, sure as you lib."

"No, Cilla, it will not give her cold. Bring up a dish of cold water and some linen," said Mr. Ellis, lifting Edith from the gig.

He carried her up to her room, and placed her in an easy-chair beside the bed, and Martha, lifting the sprained foot gently, placed it on a pillow in another chair. The handkerchief was unbound, and after Aunt Cilla had made an awkward attempt to draw off the stocking, it had to be cut off, as the boot had been, exposing the naturally small, white foot, now inflamed and swollen out of all proportion. Mr. Ellis proceeded to examine it; then, without any remark, bathed it freely with cold water, and bandaged it up again in linen dipped in the water.

"How is your head?" he asked, kindly.

"Better, I thank you," returned Edith.

"Aunt Cilla will stay with you to-night, for the cold water must be applied frequently. You must be kept very quiet, and live on low diet for a few days."

"Will she have to take any medicine?" asked Martha, making a wry face, as if she tasted something nauseous.

"A dose of cooling medicine would benefit you," said her father, turning to Edith.

"I will take it then," she answered. And saying that he would prepare some and send it up, Mr. Ellis left the apartment.

As soon as the door fairly closed on her master, Aunt Cilla, who had been very quiet, burst forth, "Bress your heart, honey, but dis am unfortunite. And it minds me so ob missus when young massa and Misser War brought her home de day she broke her head. And den de day she died too! I tinks ob it all; ob de little dead baby dat was buried wid her, and ob her poor, pale face, and I reckon as how young massa members it too, for he looks so grave like. He was ginning to look like hisself, and now it'll all be brung so forcible fore him dat I'm afeard he'll be down at de heel agin. Well," she ejaculated, piously, "de Lor gins and de Lor takes away agin. Bress de Lor's name, I hope he'll take away young massa's gravity and dis flamation fore morning."

"Is all that redness inflammation, Aunt Cilla?" asked Mary.

"Yes, honey, it am sure, and if cold water don't 'lay it, I'm afeard mortification 'll come in, den de foot 'll have to come off to de ankle—p'r'aps to de knee—and shouldn't be sprised, honey, if young massa had to chop off de whole leg clean up. Heard tell of such tings, honey."

"Oh, Aunt Cilla!" exclaimed Mary, with a look of compassion towards Edith.

"What's that you're saying, Aunt Cilla? Miss

Edith's leg 'll have to come off, will it? Now that's keeping her quiet, as papa directed, isn't it?" said Martha, entering with the medicine.

"I only 'lowed it will have to come off, honey, that's all, if mortification sot in, you know. De Lor gins and de Lor takes away, and he may take de leg, you know. Neber be sartin ob noting in dis worl', honey."

"I am certain of *one* thing—Papa will not allow you to stay with Miss Edith if I tell him how you talk. I think I 'll tell him, any way;" and she made a movement towards the door.

"Oh, now, honey, don't go for to bodder young massa. Goodness gracious! I only 'lowed it, you know." And the old negro seemed thoroughly alarmed.

"Well, papa don't allow it; but if you won't frighten Miss Edith again, I won't go."

"I was not frightened, Matty," said Edith, smiling; and Martha closed the door which she had opened, with apparent unwillingness, however, and going up to Edith, whispered in her ear that she did not intend to tell her papa, but only wished to frighten Aunt Cilla into holding her tongue.

"I am to give you this medicine as soon as ever you are in bed," she said, with a consequential air. "Horrid, isn't it? But you know you promised papa that you'd take it;" evidently anticipating as much opposition from Edith as she generally offered herself when required to take medicine.

"Now, honey, de bed am ready. I'll lif her in,

Miss Mary, and you jist hold up de cheer and slide her foot off."

"Oh, Martha, dear, not so high!" exclaimed Edith, as Martha, pushing her sister aside, caught hold of the chair, and it went up suddenly, considerably above the level of the bed. At length she was established in bed, and she laid her head on her pillow with a feeling of relief and thankfulness that she would not have to be lifted to another place before morning.

"I spec as how you'll be glad ob some tea, honey, for you had no dinner. Now what 'll you hab?" said Aunt Cilla. "Hot egg-bread, and corn-pone, and chicking, and——"

"Nothing but some toast and a cup of tea. You know Mr. Ellis said I must have low diet," interrupted Edith.

"Bress him heart, he knows bes', young massa does, dat's sartin; but I'm ob de 'pinion dat you'd been a heap better if your foot been soused in lye, and a hot supper gin you to swaller instead ob dat medicine. What you bring dar?" turning to Nelly, who entered with a server.

"Miss Eden's supper," answered the black girl.

"Humph! Toas' an' tea? Dat's young massa's orderin', I knows. Isn't it, now?" and Aunt Cilla peered into Nelly's face, obviously expecting her to say "no."

"To be sure it am. Who knows in dis house what to gib sick folks, 'side Massa Jacob?"

"I does; and I was jist gwine to order tea an'

toas' dis bery minute," replied Aunt Cilla, with a triumphant look.

After tea, Martha and Mary asked Edith if she wished them to sit with her.

"Perhaps you are sleepy?" said Mary.

"Not sleepy, dear, but very tired," answered Edith.

"We will stay here while Aunt Cilla goes down to the quarter to hear Father Ward speak to the Blacks. He always goes to see them when he comes, and they look for him," said Martha. "They have blown the horn, and papa and Mr. Ward went down before we came up stairs," she added, turning to Aunt Cilla.

"Neber you mind, honey," replied the old woman, not wishing to resign her charge into other hands. "I done heard all Misser War's talk; he'll speak to-night from de tex' 'Sarvants, obey your marsers;' haint took dat un dis long time; I knows all he's gwine to say on dat subjec', honey; stored in my mind long ago; but I reckon I'll go down and see what dat Nell's a-doing in de dining-room."

"Will one of you read me the gospel for the day?" asked Edith as soon as the door closed.

"Mary will, she reads best," answered Martha. And taking Edith's missal from the table, she handed it to her sister, who seated herself by the window for it was not yet dark, and opening the book she commenced in a clear, sweet voice. Aunt Cilla returned before the reading was finished, and stood in the doorway listening with her head bent, and her eyes fixed on the floor. When Mary

closed the book, she shut the door. "No fear in dis ole heart, Lor; I think it hab peace, and I is willing to rise and go hence; bless de Lor's name and Miser War's teachins;" and a tear dropped from her eye, and rolled down the dark cheek of the old negro, as she proceeded to light the small astral lamp.

Kissing Edith, and bidding her good-night, the two girls went into their own room, and she was left alone with Aunt Cilla, her sprained ankle, and her rosary. And so closed the day—her first Sunday at Beech Bluff.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF THE SICK-ROOM.

Her length of sickness, with what else—
Importeth thee to know this bears.

SHAKESPEARE.

EARLY the next morning Mary peeped into Edith's room, and, seeing her awake, entered in her night-gown, with her little stockingless feet thrust into slippers which, to use Martha's figurative style of speech, were a mile too large for her.

"Good-morning, Miss Edith. How long have you been awake?"

"Not long, dear," replied Edith. "But you must not stand there, for you will take cold; the mornings are very chilly."

"I'll go back directly, and get into bed again, for none of the white folks are up. I just thought I'd peep in and see if you looked comfortable," replied Mary, beginning to shiver.

"Come into my bed, Mary," said Edith.

"O no, Miss Edith! I might hurt your foot."

"No fear of that, my dear, if you are careful. Come." And the slight, trembling form was nestled close beside her.

"Matty is sound asleep; and won't she be surprised when she wakes up and finds me gone, for she always gets up first?" said Mary, in a confidential whisper. And then, after a moment of deliberation, she put her lips to Edith's, and said; "I

love you very much, Miss Edith; and I am so sorry that your foot got hurt, and I hope it will get well right soon."

Edith kissed the blushing cheek of the timid girl, who was shrinking away as though frightened at her own boldness. "I am very glad, dear Mary, that you love me, for you remind me of my sister Gracy, and I like you to put your arms around my neck as she used to do."

"Do you? Do I? I mean, do you like my arms around your neck? Miss Hannah used to say that it was too familiar. And do I look like Gracy?"

"Yes. No," said Edith, smiling at Mary's eagerness and look of delight. "I mean, I love you very much, and it pleases me, when I am so far from my friends, to have you remind me of my sister by your affectionate ways. And no, you do not look like Gracy, for she has light hair and blue eyes, and these curls of yours, dear, are a chestnut-brown. But Martha is awake"—as the sound of yawning proceeded from the next room.

"Yes, I am awake, almost," said Martha, coming into the room, still gaping, and with her eyes half shut. "What are you doing there, puss? Now, out of it, quick! You'll hurt Miss Edith's foot, and then papa'll scold."

"Indeed, Matty, papa never scolds; I'm sure you'll make Miss Edith think he is a real bear. And I don't hurt her foot at all, do I, Miss Edith?"

"You haven't touched it yet," said Edith. And Mary gave her sister a triumphant look.

"Has the inflammation all gone?" asked Martha.

"I think not, Matty; my foot and ankle were very painful all night."

"Didn't you sleep the whole night?" asked Martha, rubbing open her eyes with one doubled up hand, while the other rested on her fat side.

"No, dear. Aunt Cilla bathed my foot several times, and I expect I was a little nervous, for I did not get asleep till near morning."

"And then puss woke you up, didn't she?"—elevating her eyebrows at Mary.

"I had been awake some time when she came in," said Edith. And then, noticing Matty's bare feet, she exclaimed: "Go and dress yourself, Matty; I cannot allow you to stand in the cold with only your night-gown on."

"Here comes Aunt Cilla with some cold water to bathe your foot again; I'll just wait and see how it looks."

"Put a shawl on, right straight, Miss Matty, or you shan't see de foot at all," said Aunt Cilla, peremptorily. And, setting down the basin, she brought a shawl herself, and threw it over her young mistress' shoulders.

"O my, how it's swollen!" and, "Put your feet together, Miss Edith, and let us see the difference," exclaimed the girls, as Aunt Cilla removed the bandages.

"Now, ain't dat a purty foot, honey?" said Aunt Cilla, with an admiring glance towards the right one, as Edith put it outside of the coverlet, "Not much bigger dan your own, honey, and I allers

thought dem de tiniest, whitest little uns in de world. Put yourn here, Miss Mary; right down dar, side of dat un."

"Look at mine," said Martha, sitting down in the easy-chair, and putting her own up on the bedside.

"Dem's pincushings, honey." And they all laughed at the contrast between these two short, fat, pink feet of Martha's, and those of Edith and Mary, so slender and almost marble white.

"De born image of your mamma's ohile! Poor missus! she allers had such bodder a-gittin' shoes; neber could git none to fit; and den, 'long side de nat'ral bodder, she had de rheumatiz," said Aunt Cilla, replacing the bandages, and heaving a sigh at the recollection of her departed mistress's troubles.

"Now, honeys, run and dress yoursels, I hear Nell in yer room; and I'll red up this room a bit, fur I 'spect young massa 'll come in, right arter Misser War gwines away, to 'xamine de lame foot. Take off dat ar' cap Miss Eden, fur you don't look so like sick folks when you have yer har combed up and de cap under de piller. Nelly'll fix your har arter de young ladies am dressed; she's a hand at that bizness."

"If you will give me my combs and brushes, and that little glass, I will dress it myself," said Edith.

"Notting ob de kind, Miss Eden! 'Tain't in reason dat yer should go for to sile yer hands, when dat Nell hain't got notting to do but to wait on folks."

"But I have always been accustomed to wait on

myself, Aunt Cilla, and I prefer to dress my own hair," insisted Edith.

"Massa told me to tend to yer wants while yer stayed with us, but dese ole fingers hab lost der cunning dat dey used to hab when I tended to de wants ob missus' head; and 'side de har dressing, I'll do eberyting else," Opening the door, she asked Martha to "send Nelly to fix Miss Edith's head, when she was done with her;" and Edith thought it best not to raise any more objections at present, resolving, however, to dispense with both Aunt Cilla's and Nelly's services as soon as her foot would allow her to walk about her room and wait on herself.

"Neber saw such har, Miss Eden," said Nelly, as she drew out the comb, and let the long black mass fall over the pillow. "I aint custumed to trim such heads, and don't know as I can git dis loop up tasty, but I'll try," And she twisted and wound it around the comb, trying in vain to make it look "tasty," until Edith told her, if it was smooth, that would be sufficient. At length, her toilet was completed, and, bidding Nelly throw open the blinds, Edith rested her head on the scarlet cushion with which Aunt Cilla had propped her up, and which, it cannot be denied, was exceedingly becoming to her oriental style of beauty.

Immediately after breakfast Martha and Mary entered Edith's room, with their hands behind them and their faces wreathed in smiles.

"Which do you like the best, Miss Edith?" they

both exclaimed, stopping before they reached the bed.

"That is rather a delicate question," said Edith, smiling.

"We mean, whose hands do you like best? We have something in our hands, and you must choose, and, whichever you say, that you shall have first," said Mary, laughing and shaking herself, and thereby revealing some flowers in her own hand.

"I think I'll take Mary's hand."

"Medicine!" "Flowers!" they laughed out, holding up a bouquet of lovely flowers, yet wet with the dew, and a bottle of medicine.

Father Ward picked them himself, and told me to give them to you," said Mary, handing Edith the bouquet; "he said it would be a relief to your eyes to look at something besides the objects in your room."

"And papa sent the arnica: thought it would be a relief to your foot, I reckon," said Martha, placing the bottle on the table.

"I am much obliged for both," said Edith, examining the flowers, of which she was passionately fond. "These are lovely. I am afraid Father Ward robbed some of Uncle Sigh's plants."

"Oh, no, indeed! Uncle Sigh always gives him a bunch every time he comes here, and was going to pick some, when he told him that he would pick them himself."

"Your papa must have a medicine chest, Matty; he seems to have everything just when it is wanted. Has he not one?"

"Yes, Miss Edith, but he had no arnica, and sent over to Mr. Dudley's plantation for it last evening."

At that moment a step sounded in the hall, and Mr. Ellis stood in the doorway.

"Come in, papa!" said Mary; then, laughing, she pointed at Edith and said, "See, she likes the flowers best!"

"I am not surprised at that," said her father, giving a glance at the flowers, and then looking at the beautiful face bending over them. "Good morning, Miss Edith; how did you rest last night?"

"Not very well," replied Edith, somewhat confused.

"She never slept one bit until near morning, for she told me so," said Martha, abruptly.

"Was your foot so painful?" asked Mr. Ellis.

"It was very painful during the greater part of the night but became easier towards morning."

"I think the side of the foot is sprained as well as the ankle," said he, removing the bandages. "I was fearful, when I removed your gaiter, that the ligaments were torn, but they are only badly strained. Ah, yes, the inflammation has subsided somewhat, and by applying this arnica it will be kept down. The bruises will appear in a day or two, and you must not let Aunt Cilla alarm you by mistaking the blackness for mortification," said he, bathing the foot and ankle freely with the arnica.

"I think I should know the difference," returned Edith, with a smile. "Aunt Cilla is a very kind, attentive nurse; but—"

"A very loquacious one," interrupted Mr. Ellis.

"Not so much so as to annoy me," answered Edith. "I think I rather like to hear her talk, for it keeps my mind diverted."

"Now, what do you wish me to send you from the library?" said Mr. Ellis, rising from his chair.

"Miss Edith, won't you let me read to you?" asked Mary, with an eager face, before Edith had time to answer her father's question.

"Certainly, my dear, if you would like to do so."

"What book shall I bring?"

"Any that pleases you; select one of your own favorites," replied Edith.

"Matty," said Mr. Ellis, "do you wish to go into the garden with me?"

"Yes, sir, I'll go; but I wouldn't disturb Miss Edith if I stayed here," said Matty, divining her father's reason for asking her.

"No, Matty, you do not disturb me in the least; on the contrary, I like to have you here," Edith hastened to say, fearing that Matty's feelings had been wounded by the implication that Mary was the most judicious one to leave in the room.

"I'll go with papa to the garden awhile, and then I'll come and sit with you, after Mary has done reading aloud," answered Martha, with a gratified smile.

"You did not ask me to call again," said Mr. Ellis, as he was about to leave the apartment. He spoke in a playful tone, and as he looked back at Edith, his countenance wore that indescribable expression which occasionally illuminated his hand-

some face, despoiling its gravity, and lending to it such a peculiar charm.

"It was not necessary," she replied, slightly coloring; "a physician is never invited to call upon his patient; he is expected to do so."

"Then you may expect a professional visit from me this afternoon—after dinner;" and bowing, he left the room with the two girls.

In a few moments, Mary returned with a handsomely bound volume of *Waverley* in her hand.

"I have brought '*Kenilworth*,' Miss Edith; have you ever read it?"

"Yes, long ago; but I would like to hear it read, my dear," replied Edith.

"I began it two or three weeks ago, and read a few chapters, but I will begin at the very beginning, so that we can enjoy it together," said Mary, opening the book.

"How far did you read, dear?"

"Let me see!" said Mary, knitting her brows as she turned over the leaves.

"I read to where Amy's father sent for her, and she would not go with Tressilian, and he and Varney almost got into a quarrel. I don't think I am going to like that Varney, somehow or other; I expect he will be the villain in the story. You know, Miss Edith, every story has to have a villain; and then Leicester sent Amy a necklace; that is as far as I read."

"Commence the fifth chapter, Mary. I remember all that is contained in the preceding chapters."

"Wasn't it funny that the reading of 'Cumnor Hall' should have made Scott write this book?

'The dews of summer night did fall;
The moon sweet regent of the sky,
Silvered the walls of Cumnor Hall
And many an oak that grew thereby.'

I read about that in the introduction. Now I will begin, Miss Edith." And, sitting back comfortably in the easy-chair, Mary commenced and read for some time, pausing occasionally to make some remark on the character of Varney, whom she obviously considered capable of the most atrocious crimes; to laugh at the surprise and delight of the countess and her maid Janet, when first introduced into the splendid apartments prepared without their knowledge in the mansion which was nothing more nor less than Amy's prison-house; and to look ahead a little to see if Leicester was soon coming to his lonely countess, hoping all the while that he would not turn out bad, after all.

When Martha returned, so absorbed was Mary in the book that she did not look up, but continued reading without noticing her sister's entrance. Edith smiled and motioned to Martha, to be seated, and, sitting down by the window, after a few restless moments her attention became fixed, and she listened with as much interest as Mary read.

The reading was not interrupted until Aunt Cilla came into the room for the purpose of bathing the foot; then Mary drew a long breath, and closing the book asked what o'clock it was. "Oh, Aunt Cilla, it can't be so late!" she exclaimed, doubtingly, when told that the clock had struck twelve.

"Yes, indeed, honey, it am, sartin; de horn done blowed fur de sarvants' dinner."

"I've been reading three hours; but isn't the book interesting, Miss Edith? Don't you like it, Matty?"

"Yes, almost as well as Robinson Crusoe. I want to know what became of Amy, and if the earl took her to court. I'd have taken her there, just out of spite, to let that red-headed old queen see how handsome she was! But wasn't Leicester mean to leave her in that big house alone with Tony Foster and Janet?" said Matty, looking very indignant, her voice considerably raised under the influence of her feelings, and forgetting for the moment that her own hair verged on the "last rays of the May-day sun," as well as Queen Elizabeth's.

"But, Matty," said Mary, who seemed disposed to take the part of the Earl of Leicester, he having evidently made a favorable impression on her mind, "I am sure the earl wanted to have her with him all the time, but you know that he had married her without the queen's permission, and she had such a horrid temper that as like as not she would have imprisoned Amy, and had all her teeth pulled out to spoil her beauty."

Martha still seemed suspicious of the noble earl, notwithstanding her sister's animated if not able speech in his defence, and Mary appealed to Edith to confirm what she had said.

"Just tell us why he left her in Cumnor Hall while he was playing beau to Queen Elizabeth!

that's what we want to know, Miss Edith," said Martha.

"I will explain as well as I am able, my dear," said Edith. "In the first place, he had, as Mary observed, married Amy Robsart secretly, without her father's knowledge or the queen's permission, and it was necessary, therefore, to keep her in retirement until a favorable opportunity offered for revealing his marriage; and while his visits were frequent, she was reconciled to the seclusion, and patiently waited till he should present her to the world as his countess. But Leicester was a great favorite of the queen, who, it was thought, wished to make him her husband, and he knew that she would be very angry when she discovered that he had deceived her, and the favors which she had heaped upon him he expected would be withdrawn. Being a very ambitious man, this dread of the queen's displeasure and fear of the consequences caused him to delay the announcement of his marriage, until, finally, he was obliged to confess it in order to save—but I am telling the whole story," she said, laughing. "Do you understand now why the earl left his countess in the manor-house while he was at court?"

"Yes, Miss Edith, I do," answered Martha, not one whit the less indignant; "he liked his place beside the queen better than he loved his wife; so he was mean, after all."

"Pity if he was mean," said Mary, the word *mean* expressed everything unworthy, "for he was so handsome, and Amy loved him so much;" and

she opened the book, and prepared to resume the reading.

"No, Mary," said Edith, checking her, "you have read quite sufficient for to-day. You have been sitting still quite long enough; you had better run down stairs now, and take some exercise before dinner."

"It's too warm, Miss Edith," said Mary, not wishing to relinquish the book.

"Perhaps Miss Edith will allow you to read after dinner," said Martha, looking rather doubtful, however.

"Positively no more to-day, my dear," said Edith, decidedly, and the two girls went out of the room saying that they would go into the garden and find their father, and ask him what he thought of Kenilworth. The words "Tressilian," "Varney," "Amy," "Mean," "Leicester," &c., reached Edith's ear as they ran down stairs, and she smiled at the interest Martha evinced in the story, and at her acknowledgment that it pleased her almost as well as Robinson Crusoe.

Edith had discovered the poverty of Catholic works in Mr. Ellis's library, the few there being controversial and not suited to his young daughters, who thoroughly instructed by Father Ward in their catechism, needed no arguments to be convinced of the truth of the church doctrines. Martha had said, in answer to a question of Edith's, that she found the Trinity to be the "hardest" to understand, until Father Ward held up before her, one day when they were walking, a three-leaved clover

—the shamrock—and then she perfectly understood how there could be *three* in *one*. Mary's taste for reading, left, as she had been to her own direction, had led her to the perusal of whatever books her father's shelves offered as attractive; Cooper, Scott, and Dickens had received a full share of attention, together with the various poets, but this desultory reading had been of little benefit, merely entertainment for the hour, and had resulted in a confusion of ideas, which is the never-failing consequence of want and of method. Besides, in all the child's reading, there had entered no books calculated to educate the heart, and with Edith's Catholic views, she must believe that of infinitely greater importance than the mere instruction or entertainment of the mind; she had, from the spoken sentiments of her pupils for there was but small opportunity to vince character by action, been guided to a tolerably correct estimate of their individual character, and had obtained hints for the mode of education each demanded. The course of reading she had already settled upon, and we may suppose it was not to be confined to the books in Beech Bluff library.

Mr. Ellis made his professional visit after dinner, and Edith took the opportunity to ask him to obtain for her a chest of books from Augusta.

He laughed as he spoke of the discussion between his daughters, at the dinner-table, relative to the merits and demerits of the Earl of Leicester, and said, in answer to a question from Edith, "I do not object to their reading Scott's works, though, as a

general thing, I do not approve of their reading works of fiction at so early an age, when their minds should be given almost wholly to their studies. But when read occasionally, and under the eye of a judicious person, I think that works like the Waverley Novels are beneficial, not only as a recreation to the mind, but on account of the beauty and easy flow of language which distinguish all of Scott's writings, and which I have an idea that young persons insensibly glide into the use of by becoming familiar with it in reading. I am pleased to have them read aloud," he continued, "and should have encouraged them in doing so myself, but their mother had an unconquerable aversion to hearing a person read aloud, and even the reading of the lessons in the Episcopal service made her nervous. Mary used sometimes to read to me in the library, but her mother usually occupied the sitting-room, and I found that it annoyed her so much that we at last gave it up; and since her death I have sadly neglected them, allowing Mary to go off by herself and read, while Martha has passed her time since Miss Hannah went away in riding horseback, and amusing herself on the Indian mound, which she called an island, bringing children from the quarter to inhabit it, and getting furious at Uncle Sigh, when he has ventured to interfere with her 'savages.' She never seemed to have any taste for books, and I am rather surprised at the interest which Kenilworth seems to have awakened; if encouraged, it may engender a taste for history, as most of Scott's characters are historical."

Aunt Cilla was standing beside the bed, preparing fresh linen for Edith's foot; and when Mr. Ellis mentioned the singular dislike of his wife to hearing a person read, she ejaculated, as if offering an excuse for her departed mistress, "So narvous, so terribly narvous!"

"The days glided quietly and uneventfully by. Mr. Ellis's visits became more frequent as Edith was able to sit up, and however dull she might feel, the dulness rapidly vanished when his pleasant face appeared at the door, and he smiled at her cheerful welcome. The readings continued to take place every morning, and by the time Edith's books had arrived from Augusta the little reading circle had followed Amy Robsart through her sad fortunes, and were ready to commence the very book that had been left lying on the work table at the Stanford farm. It proved even more interesting to the girls, than the fascinating pages of Kenilworth. While Mary and Edith read by turns, Martha was learning to sew, something difficult of accomplishment, but for the interest awakened by the reading, which, in Aunt Cilla's phraseology "kep' her down." Her endeavors in needle work, threatened to be exhausted on a handkerchief she aspired to hem for her father, and which, when completed presented quite a scarlet border from the blood stains originating in the awkward stabbing of her fingers;—that handkerchief was looked upon, with loving satisfaction by her father then, and long afterwards with misty eyes; it was her never-to-be-forgotten first piece of industry.

Edith considered it advisable to turn away from the beaten track of "systematic reading" and travel for awhile the bye-way of fiction, but "fiction following closely on the footsteps of truth." Consequently after "Fabiola" had been followed up by the lives of St. Agnes—St. Cecilia, then those beautiful works of Lady Fullerton, with their healthy and religious tone, were introduced and created a spirit of enthusiasm in the Beech Bluff circle. History was to be confined to the school-room, and spiritual reading to Edith's apartment the last half hour before retiring, and this last hour was often found to be the pleasantest of the day.

Selim was not brought out quite so often to gallop on the hills with his young mistress; the Indian mound was less frequented, and the little "savages" at the quarter asked in vain for "Miss Crusoe," as they called Matty when playing on their island. She had become more subdued in her manners, though she had lost none of her independent ways, and the lofty expression of her countenance was not abated one jot; but her voice had become more gentle, and her speech more refined, and there was a very perceptible change for the better in the style of her toilet. Her hair was carefully plaited and bound with ribbons; the old calico sacques had been discarded, and the capes of her dresses had taken their place, and her shoe-strings no longer tripped her up, but were neatly tied around her ankles. Mr. Ellis remarked the change with pleasure, and one day, when Martha entered Edith's room looking particularly neat, he

said, as he drew her towards him, "Matty, I know of nothing that has given me so much real pleasure of late, as the improvement in your personal appearance; and now, my child, if you value the compliment at all, just share it with Miss Edith, for I am sure it is she who has been teaching you that 'cleanliness is next unto godliness.'"

It was two weeks after the accident that the declining sun threw its last rays across a letter which Edith held in her hand as she sat at her window looking out with thoughtful eyes upon the lawn. The letter was from her mother, and this was the third time it had been read and pondered over.

After giving in detail all the little incidents of home-life, every one of which Edith read and re-read, smiled or sighed over in a manner which contradicted the opening statement of the letter, that nothing of interest had occurred at the farm since she left home, Mrs. Stanford added a few items of "town news." A new star had appeared suddenly on the horizon of B—— society a few days after Edith's departure, dazzling every one with its splendor, and making all those bodies which had been considered as luminaries appear dim and insignificant, and, shooting meteor-like into that part of the firmament where the greatest number of satellites revolved, it had drawn them into its own orbit, thereby creating the greatest consternation and dismay among all other stars both great and small.

In other words, a niece of Mrs. Richards, returning home to New York, after a tour through the

Canadas, had stopped at the lovely village of B——, and, pleased with the quiet beauty of the place, she had prevailed on her friends to leave her with her aunt, promising to return, under the escort of her uncle, to her city-home in October. A few evenings after her arrival, she attended a soiree with her aunt, when her loveliness and unequalled musical performance had made her the bright particular star of the evening. Invitations followed in rapid succession, for it was understood that her stay was limited; and, at the time Mrs. Stanford wrote, nightly soirees were being given for this young stranger, whose brilliant beauty was the theme of every tongue.

"You once told me," wrote Mrs. Stanford, "that you did not believe that the *principle of constancy in attachments* ever existed in Charles Howard's nature; and since you are so skeptical on that point, you will not be much surprised to learn that he is Miss Acton's constant attendant and—I have been told—her avowed admirer."

Had Mrs. Stanford been present, Edith, no doubt, would have felt strongly tempted to use the old lady's triumphant expression, "I told you so!" or, "I knew it!" She was *not* surprised at Charles Howard's worshipping at another shrine in less than a fortnight after his separation from the divinity whom he had professed to adore, and before whom, but a short time previous, he had knelt and pleaded so earnestly to be allowed to hope that she would look with favor upon his suit; but she did marvel that it awakened no other feeling in her breast save that of pity for so fickle a nature, and she doubted if

she knew her own heart when she told her mother that she loved him ; and she wondered if she had mistaken for *love* a feeling of gratified vanity at the acknowledged preference of a person so talented, handsome, and wealthy.

"Then why did my heart throb more quickly and my cheek burn at his approach?" she asked herself. "It certainly could not have been *love*, or I would not feel this utter indifference at the transfer of his affections. Not even a feeling of wounded pride is aroused. I did not love him ; I was merely fascinated while in his presence, like the bird under the eye of the charmer, whose influence is gone as soon as his eye is withdrawn.

"Better that I came away, since he is a fixture in B——, and meeting him constantly was unavoidable ; he would have danced attendance, dear knows how long ! He knows quite well his own attractions ; even poor, dear, Mother was taken by them ; but now she sees—she sees I was right, I have found my vocation ; I am destined to be an old maid teacher, and certainly, I could not have found elsewhere a more agreeable novitiate. Blessed Mother, you who heard my prayer for deliverance from the irresistible influence I was fast succumbing to, and led my footsteps hither, aid me to deal justly by those young souls committed to my care."

Edith's head was now bent upon her two hands, and throbbed with the thought of the responsibility she had assumed. She felt that she was losing time, she must be up and doing ; her foot and ankle were well enough to admit of her going to the school-

room—and she would propose commencing her duties at once.

"Nobody but young massa, Miss Eden," said Aunt Cilla, as Edith started suddenly at the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

She was quietly folding up the letter when Mr. Ellis entered the room; and, with a very grave face, she said, without looking up, however, "I am glad to see you, Mr. Ellis, for I wish to ask you a question."

"How can you see me when your eyes are in another direction?" said he, smiling, and standing directly before her.

Her forefathers would not have felt much flattered at the epithets she was mentally bestowing on their blood coursing through her veins, and which seemed to have a decided tendency to her face, as if she were placed here for the purpose of blushing for their misdeeds.

"Is it a question of life or death?" he asked, seating himself in the chair which Aunt Cilla placed for him. "I judge it must be, from the serious expression of your face."

"It is a very important one, at least to me," she replied, shaking her head, and smiling.

"If so, it will require mature deliberation before I can venture to answer it; a week, at least, will be necessary."

"I think you will be able to answer it at once," she answered, more than half suspecting that he knew it already.

"Very well. Now for this important question."

And he bent forward with an affectation of fixed attention.

"Can I commence my school work to-morrow?" she asked, abruptly.

"If you desire to do so, certainly."

She looked up in astonishment at his ready acquiescence, for she had expected opposition from the fact that she had not yet been down stairs, and, moreover, he had told her that she must not use her foot for a week, as it was not in a proper state to walk.

After a moment's pause, he asked, "Have you walked to-day?"

"I walked into the next room and through the hall," she replied.

"Why is it so important that you should commence school to-morrow?" he asked.

"I came here for the purpose of teaching, and I do not wish to be idle longer than is absolutely necessary," she replied.

"In other words," said he, rising from his chair, and standing with his hand resting upon the back of it, "you have been thinking of the two years in durance vile, and conclude that the sooner you commence your work the sooner it will be finished. Perhaps you fear that the time spent in idleness, as you are pleased to term it (you forget the readings, which have been so profitable to my daughters), will delay your return to your friends; permit me, Miss Edith, to assure you that I am not a hard master, requiring the uttermost farthing, but your two years in my employ commenced the day you left

your home. If I have displayed over solicitude for your health, you must excuse it; but a sprain like that"—pointing towards her foot—"if not well cared for in the recovery, might injure the general health, and it would be unfortunate, certainly, if you were to experience any ill effects from the premature use of your foot; for illness is not very desirable at any time or place, least of all where there is no better nursing than Beech Bluff affords."

He stood before her in expectation of some reply; but she was so surprised to find her words misconstrued, and so unprepared for the sudden change in his manner, that she could not at first speak.

After waiting a moment, he continued: "I judged that you were going to ask permission to walk in the garden, as you expressed a wish to that effect yesterday; and, knowing that the gravel and inequalities of the walk would be an obstacle to your doing so, I was prepared to utter a refusal—taking the liberty of a physician," said, he, with the shadow of a smile on his flushed face.

"I am sorry, Mr. Ellis, that you have so misinterpreted my meaning," she at length said; and her voice, which was at first unsteady, became firmer, as she thought that he had done her an injustice in the motives he had attributed to her wish to commence school. "I am here as your daughter's governess, and it is very natural that I should wish to enter upon my duties as soon as possible, particularly as I discover that the girls are impatient to begin their studies; and since you have prohibited their bringing their books to my room, I feel that I

ought to make an effort to attend to them in the school-room."

"It would require an effort, then?" said Mr. Ellis, with a significant smile.

Without noticing the interruption, she continued, "My general health is perfect, and since I can use my foot sufficiently to go about my room, I think I might make the attempt to go down stairs with Aunt Cilla's assistance, and without apprehending any *ill effects* to result from it either. If I were not satisfied that I could accomplish the journey without difficulty, I would not be so imprudent as to undertake it, for I should be very loth to be brought back to my room to draw more largely upon the attention and sympathy of my nurses, of whose unwearied kindness I am fully sensible, and only regret that I cannot express how much I appreciate it. I hope, Mr. Ellis, that you will not think that I look back upon the last two weeks as lost time, for I assure you that I value them for the close companionship that has existed between myself and the girls, and which has given me an insight into their characters that will enable me to adapt myself to their different dispositions and thus discharge my duty more faithfully."

All embarrassment and timidity had disappeared from her manner, and she looked into his face with her full, dark eyes, and spoke earnestly, as if she wished to convince him that she was not so parsimonious of her time as he had supposed. Gazing into her upturned face for a moment, his stiff, formal manner relaxed gradually into its usual quiet dig-

nity, and he said, in a very mild voice—though his face flushed, and the veins in his forehead became fuller as he spoke—"You must forgive me, Miss Edith; I was hasty, and my words were unkind, ungentlemanly, and I sincerely regret them. The school-room will be ready for you in the morning, since your strong sense of duty will not allow you another week for the better recovery of your foot, and you pupils will without doubt be glad to welcome you."

There was not the least bit of irony in his tone, but he spoke as if wishing to excuse himself for allowing her to undertake what he was convinced she was not able to perform—going up and down the long flight of stairs.

"Will you rest better now that this important question is decided?" he asked, with a return of his pleasant way, and the old, sweet smile.

"Perhaps so," she replied; and, with the accustomed, "Well, good-night," he left the room, and no sooner had his footsteps died away than, leaning forward, and resting her head on the vacant chair before her, she burst into tears; and, forgetful of the presence of the old housekeeper, she exclaimed, "It *was* ungentlemanly and unkind to tell me in almost plain words that I had more solicitude about my salary than my health, that I thought I was losing time and money; and then to think me ungrateful for all the kindness they have bestowed upon me;" and the tears and sobs came thick and fast.

"Now, Miss Eden," said the kind voice of Aunt

Cilla, "you'm bery foolish, for young massa didn't mean a ting, just noting at all; it only hurt his pride when he tot dat you wanted to take up school and get it ober as soon as you could, and git hum agin, jis as if dar wa'n't nobody here fit to shoshate wid, and 'sif you didn't like us. Now honey, *don't* take on so, for massa sorry, I knows by de big veins in his forehead, and he won't do it agin. You must git used to dese ways, Miss Eden." After waiting a moment, she discovered the letter in Edith's hand, and exclaimed, "It's dat letter, Miss Eden, I knows; not massa's words, arter all. You'm homesick, honey. Dat's what ale de chile, arter all, and dis bery to-morrow you must go out to ride, and git cheered up; I'll speak to—Miss Mattie about it," said she, checking herself as she was about to say "young massa."

Aunt Cilla was not far from the truth in thinking that Edith was homesick, for the feeling which had possession of her at that moment bordered more closely on homesickness than she was willing to acknowledge even to herself, and when Aunt Cilla mentioned the letter, a fresh burst of tears was her only response. Her thoughts made a pilgrimage to the dear old farm-house, and she fancied the inmates spending a quiet, pleasant evening together, while she, so far distant, was weeping in her chamber, with none to comfort her save the old negro servant; then her thoughts flew back again, and she no longer accused Mr. Ellis of unjustly thinking her ungrateful, but she chided herself for being so; she remembered how the *trio* in her present home

had by their united efforts made the two weeks of confinement to her room pass so pleasantly and rapidly away. She thought of their loving kindnesses, of the affection that was lavished upon her by the girls, and a smile mingled with tears as she remembered how often the bright expression, which she liked so much, had been called to Mr. Ellis's face by her own happy, contagious, laugh; of his invariable look of surprise—and, she had sometimes fancied of regret—when warned of the lateness of the hour by the entrance of Aunt Cilla with the astral lamp, which always occurred simultaneously with his pleasant "good night, Miss Edith," as he left her room, accompanied by the two girls. Then her thoughts traveled home again, and brought all her friends to Beech Bluff, and they were having an exciting time over sprained ankles, cold water, and arnica, when she was aroused by the voice of Aunt Cilla, exclaiming—

"Wake up, Miss Eden, it's nigh on to 'leven!" and she was surprised, when fully aroused, to find her tears all dried, and herself more inclined to smile than to weep. "Dat's right, honey; I'm glad to see yer own cheerful face agin. Now undress yerself, and get to bed, fur it's late, sartin," said Aunt Cilla, exercising the authority of a nurse.

"Then I've really been asleep?" said Edith, interrogatively.

"Ob course you hab. You didn't snore, but I knowed by yer reg'lar breathing dat yer was sleepin'; and when yer didn't lif yer head to speak to the young missusses when dey kissed you, fore

dey went into der own room, den I know'd it more so."

While she was preparing for her couch, Edith arranged in her mind the hours for study and music lessons. "I must begin my work in earnest," said she to herself; "my time belongs to my pupils now, and I must make it as profitable to them as possible. To-morrow I commence my *governess* life; no longer the idle recipient of favors, but an instructor, a laborer in a vineyard, placed here to train the vines in a manner that will be acceptable to my master;" the long hair is hastily bound up in the becoming little cap, and she turns from the reflection in the glass, and continues her meditations: "I must not allow my thoughts to dwell on any subject in such a manner as will cause me to neglect my duties or forget my pupils' interests. Since they are without a mother to counsel them, they must be my companions out of school hours, and I must watch over them, reproving whatever would be displeasing to a mother's eye, and encouraging in them everything good and noble." Some pins were stuck into the cushion, and more resolutions were adopted. "They must be disciplined to habits of punctuality and neatness, which, if acquired at home, will spare them many a mortification and unhappy moment at their finishing school. How often I have pitied students at the seminary when sent from the school-room or dinner-table in disgrace for untidiness in dress, or tardiness in attendance, habits which had, without doubt, passed unobserved and unproved at home, but which Mr.

Richards never tolerated in his school. Mary seems to have a strong, natural sense of propriety about her dress and deportment, and Martha is fast acquiring it." A pause. "Aunt Cilla, will you draw off this stocking? How quickly his blood was up when he thought I doubted his generosity, and expected he would require me to remain two weeks over the stipulated two years! What a construction to put on my simple words! Who ever heard of a governess *petitioning* her employer to allow her to commence her work? And the result—a *scene*! I wonder if this would come under the head of *shabby treatment*? Put up the curtain, if you please, Aunt Cilla;" and, as the moonlight streams into the room, and the kind attendant closes the door, we will let the curtain fall, and leave Edith to her dreams.

CHAPTER IX.

STUMBLING BLOCKS.

It is the Fourteenth of August, and we find Edith with Mary and Martha, six miles from home, decorating the altars of the Church of the "Assumption" preparatory to the morrow's festival; wonderful wreaths, and flowry garlands have been woven, numberless candles have been arranged, and the new altar linens of Edith's furnishing have taken the place of those yellowed by their year of service. A high arch has been erected over the Altar of Our Lady, and covered and festooned with evergreens, and dotted with candles, it screens the bare boards which, as yet, furnish the only altar-piece, in that rude building. A new lace trimmed scarf of soft white muslin has found its way from Edith's trunk—and drapes the statue of the Blessed Virgin; on each side are plants in full blossom, and around are the empty vases waiting for the flowers to be brought fresh in the morning. The back ground of the sanctuary is a perfect net work of vines and branches of green leaves, and in the very centre above the tabernacle, is a large cross of the least perishable flowers. The whole arrangement shows the most loving care, and diligence.

The girls gaze in admiration, of their successful efforts to beautify and adorn that humble temple of the Lord, whom they would receive on the following morning in their first Holy communion. All day they have been there and laboured without

pause, and now that everything is complete they rest upon the doorsteps and watched Edith inside give the last finishing touches. The sun is quite on the decline, and throws its beams in the doorway upon the weary girls—and through the church to the very spot where Edith is kneeling to say a parting prayer.

"Let us say one decade of our beads before we go," said Mary, and the sisters go in quietly and sink upon their knees before the statue of our Blessed Mother. Their thoughts had gone back to the mother who one year before had so suddenly been taken from them, and they prayed for the departed. A shadow fell across the threshold; Mr. Ellis looked in upon the beautiful scene—and not without emotion. "What could be more lovely?" he mentally ejaculated, and turning away repeated Mrs. Hemans beautiful lines descriptive of an altar in the "Forest Sanctuary."

———what glimmer'd faintly on my sight,
Faintly, yet brightening, as a wreath of snow
Seen through dissolving haze?—The moon, the night,
Had waned, and dawn poured in;—grey, shadowy,
slow,
Yet day-spring still!—a solemn hue it caught,
Piercing the storied windows; darkly fraught
With stoles and draperies of imperial glow;
And soft, and sad, that coloring gleam was thrown,
Where, pale, a pictured form above the altar shone.

He paused again before the open door, and said almost audibly, "No pictured form above the altar" here but that cross in its "lone brightness" sheds its fragrance over all—" again he went over the lines descriptive of the picture representing Him who
"as o'er glass, didst walk that stormy sea"

and repeated more than once "*aid for one sinking*" "*I perish—save!*"

The ride home was quiet, for all were tired, even Mr. Ellis who had ridden far that day and made it in his way, though it was much out of it, to return to Beach Bluff by the way of the Church, in order to escort his daughters and Miss Edith, and thereby dispense with Uncle Sigh's attendance.

"A penny for your thoughts Miss Edith" at length said Mr. Ellis riding beside her.

She started, and colored—"you might not think them worth the penny."

"Let me be the judge of their nature," he replied smiling.

"You, might think me guilty of an impertinence, if I were to give them expression," she answered quite gravely.

"You make me curious to know, and I beg you to tell me."

"I was thinking how very strange it is you do not follow in the footsteps of your wife who you acknowledge received so much consolation from our Holy Religion—tho' she was permitted to enjoy it but for a brief time in the church militant."

"She believed in all that the church believes and teaches. I cannot, though God knows I would if I could."

"You can not of yourself, certainly."

"To believe, must, depend upon the will of him who believes," said Mr. Ellis.

"So St. Thomas says, but he adds that "the will of man must be prepared by God through grace,"

and St. Paul says, "For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God," returned Edith.

"I have once before said, that if faith be good for me, why is it not bestowed if it be a gift of God?"

"It depends upon the disposition of your will, whether you reject or accept the truths as presented to you."

I remember you once said that you considered me in a "good disposition or something to that effect."

"So I did and do, and it surprises me that being in this disposition you should be so *spiritually indolent*. Why do you not submit your doubts and difficulties to Mr. Ward? I can not believe that you *are* such a doubting Thomas as you would have me to believe. Else why are you having your children reared in the faith? you cannot be so unreasonable as to think that one path will serve them,—another you—and each will lead to Glory? you would show yourself opposed to Scripture which says there is but *One Faith, One Baptism*."

"There seems a great want of charity in believing that all *out* of your faith must be lost, which I believe is one of your dogmas, one which I cannot reconcile myself to."

"You are not required to believe anything of the kind; God would not condemn souls invincibly ignorant, if such there be. Those who have lead as perfect a life as possible, observing God's laws, and are *unavoidably* ignorant of the "One Faith, One Baptism," may with the help of Divine grace obtain that for which they strive—

Eternal Life—But one who has the truth presented to him, and rejects it from blind prejudice, refuses to seek explanation of whatever is obscure to his mind, and who, not making use of the means at his disposal to arrive at the truth, dies in presumptuous ignorance, has failed in his duty both to God and to himself, and, God will judge him accordingly.

"Are you improvising?" asked Mr. Ellis, as Edith went on elucidating the particular points which her companion presented as stumbling-blocks, some of which were simply points of Catholic discipline, which had become bug-bears, arresting him half way notwithstanding that he had found so much in the teachings of the church to command his admiration.

"I am not; what I am saying is to be found in almost any work of Catholic instruction; some Theologian has said that, "God never gathers where he has not sown." Willing that *all* men be saved he offers to each and all the grace indispensable to salvation; if it be rejected, cast away, than will the "gates of light" be forever closed. God never demands impossibilities. He makes a kind provision for those souls who by reason of their surroundings, circumstances beyond their control, are prevented from ever knowing the truth; if they act according to the light and grace they receive, be the light ever so dim, then are they faithful servants, and worthy to enter into the joy of their Lord; how much more worthy than those, who having every opportunity of becoming enlightened, yet remain invincibly ignorant; brought face to face

with the great truths revealed by God, yet turn their backs upon them; receiving God's grace, yet smothering its growth by refusing to correspond with it. *Pride* is the cause of more than half the ignorance in the world of the Catholic Faith; one accustomed to rely solely upon his own guidance, and to be guided by his own light, resents the thought of receiving enlightenment, from another. There is something monstrously opposed to his dignity in becoming "as a little child," and submitting to be taught; therefore he declines to seek counsel, to reveal the questionings of his mind, perhaps desires of his heart, to learn from some one of those teachers, whose lives are given to the work of supplying light (themselves enlightened by long years of study,) to the gropers after truth."

Ever eloquent on the theme of her Religion Edith, now that Mr. Ellis had drawn her out, spoke with warmth and to the purpose. There was a long pause. The girls had galloped on far ahead, and in the distance could be seen the tall Beech trees of the Bluff; suddenly Edith turned and laying the handle of her whip on the arm of her companion, she looked pleadingly in his face and said in a low earnest voice.

"If you go on forever groping, the light may break suddenly, when it is too late."

He started slightly, touched his own horse lightly with his whip, then gave the same hint to Edith's pony and they rode rapidly forward for a few moments; at length, riding again more slowly, he broke the silence.

"Your last words reminded me of an incident which occurred not long since. I was traveling in the west, and stopped over night at a house situated on the bank of a small stream; early in the morning I went out on the porch; scarcely had I seated myself when an old man ascended the steps and took a seat near me. We had entered into conversation with that informality which characterises travelers generally, when a voice, clear and powerful, sent forth such a strain of melody that we ceased speaking and listened. It came apparently from the window above the porch, and was echoed back from the hills across the narrow river; the only words I heard distinctly were those of the refrain,

"Too late, too late, ye cannot enter here."

Back from the other side came the echo—"enter here."

The old man laid his hand upon my shoulder and said.

"That is a voice from the *other shore*—does it speak to *you* or to *me*? let us hope to both for it cannot enter into the mind of man to conceive of the misery of those souls shut forever out of heaven."

"Judging from your appearance, my friend *I* replied, you at least cannot be far off from that 'other shore' you speak of."

"It is not a matter of age, not a matter of age; I see, every day the young dropping around me, and I am still left to cumber the earth—God knows why; I am on my way now to see the 'Black Robe' as the Indians call the Priest who has a mission

Church below here; I have seen him before—many times, and each time I think will be the last; I came at the eleventh hour, and am giving but the feeblest part of my life to Him who has given length of days to me; I am indeed ‘too late’ to do Him much service on earth, but not too late I trust to glorify Him eventually in Heaven. His goodness exceeds our sinfulness.” The old man’s horse was led to the steps, and he rose to depart. ‘Good day—my friend, good day—I hope to meet you on the *other shore*’ and added impressively “don’t be ‘too late.’”

On my return some weeks after, I again remained over night at the same house; at the breakfast table was one whom I recognized, by his cloth, I suppose you would say, to be a priest; I remembered my old friend of the porch, and presumed the clergyman present to be the “Black Robe” he had alluded to—I was interested in the stranger of the previous visit, and ventured to make some enquiries. The old man was dead—the priest was on his return from performing the last rites of the Church. I never hear the words *too late* without also hearing the echo as we heard it,—the old man and I—that morning, return to us so distinctly from the hills beyond the river.—“*Enter here!*”

CHAPTER X.

CHANGE OF SCENE.

"There was pride in the head she carried so high,
Pride in her lip, and pride in her eye,
And a world of pride in the very sigh
That her stately bosom was fretting."

"The pith o' sense, and pride o' wrath,
Are higher ranks than a' that.

MONTHS have elapsed since Edith commenced the daily routine of school work, and on the morning before Christmas we find her and her two pupils dressed for a short journey; they are going to Augusta to spend the holidays, and as they stand before the sitting-room grate, drawing on their gloves, Martha and Mary bewail the inopportune illness of the overseer, which prevents their father from accompanying them in this their annual visit to their aunt.

Since the interview recorded in the last chapter between Edith and Mr. Ellis, they have seldom met save at meals, for Mr. Ellis's time has been wholly occupied with plantation affairs, the whole charge of which has devolved upon him; but he promises to follow them as soon as possible, and, as he places his daughters in the carriage, he smilingly bids them not to allow Cousin Fred to run off with Miss Edith; and then, pressing a small gloved hand a moment in his own, he bids them all good-by, and stands watching the carriage as it rolls down the avenue. Something very like a sigh escapes him

as he enters the house, and the words, "pride, Morgan, unavoidable, Frederick," etc., are muttered as he slowly paces up and down the library with folded arms and anxious face.

It was one o'clock when the carriage stopped before an elegant mansion, the door of which was thrown open by a stout, pompous-looking colored man, who ushered our young friends into a small reception room; then, opening the door of an adjoining apartment, he called out, "Mr. Jacob's family hab arrived;" and a large, majestic looking lady arose from her seat before the fire, and advancing a few steps, said, "Come into the parlor, my dears." She embraced her nieces, and then, turning to Edith, said, with a haughty inclination of her head, "The governess, I presume. Matty, my dear, the name, if you please."

"Miss Edith, Aunt Martha."

"Miss Edith, I hope you'll make yourself comfortable, and feel at home with your charges here. Mary, when will your father arrive?"

"I don't know, Aunt Martha; next week, perhaps."

"Ah, I am extremely sorry that Snyder is ill; I was in hopes that this visit would have cheered your father somewhat; but if he only remains a day or two, we cannot effect much in that short time." While she spoke, she was scanning Edith closely, with a cold, proud look. Reseating herself, she said, "You will find your cousin up stairs, girls. You had better go up and dress for dinner; to your old room, Martha, and—Christopher"

(calling to the porter in the hall), "show Miss Edith—this lady—to the green-room."

"Oh, Aunt Martha, please let Miss Edith have the room next to ours," said Matty and Mary in the same breath.

"No, my dears; the room next to the one you always occupy is reserved for Emily Owen."

"When is *she* coming," asked Matty, with a look which was indicative of anything but pleasure at the prospect of such an acquisition to their Christmas circle.

"We expect her to-morrow," replied her aunt.

"Well, Aunt Martha, please let Miss Edith sleep in that room to-night," said Matty, in a coaxing tone.

"I have had the green-room prepared for your governess, and"—with another haughty bow to Edith—"I presume she will have no objections to taking immediate possession of it."

"Certainly not," said Edith. And without more words, they followed the stout waiter out of the room.

"I'll come over as soon as ever I get dressed," said Matty, running after Edith; and then she disappeared with her sister through an arched doorway, and as Edith walked in another direction, she heard their voices and feet as they ran up stairs.

The green-room was a small apartment, having one window draped with green chintz, under which was a green Venetian blind, which rendered the room quite dark. Drawing back the curtains, Edith let in the sunlight, which danced on the green

wall, and revealed an ingrain carpet and chairs of the same verdant hue.

"What was this room ever intended for?" asked Edith of herself, as she slowly untied her bonnet strings, and looked up at the dark ceiling. "Weak eyes, probably," herself answered; and, apparently satisfied with this solution, she walked to the window and looked out. "Nothing to be seen but two or three cabins and some brick walls beyond; not an evergreen in sight *without* doors," she said, again addressing herself. "The girls' room is probably in front; this is certainly in the rear, and those were back stairs that I came up. I see plainly that *governesses* are, as George would say, below par in this quarter—obviously below the state of equality in Mrs. Morgan's estimation." She looked around the room again and walked to the small Franklin stove which stood in the fireplace, looking as cold and uninviting as did the mistress of the house herself. "Well, I must keep down my pride for two weeks, and submit to their being proud with me"—and she poked the dying embers vigorously. "This is a cool reception in every sense of the word. I wonder if there is any coal or wood up here." Not finding any, she pulled the green bell-cord, and a pert-looking mulatto girl obeyed the summons.

"Will you bring me up some wood? my fire is almost out."

Without answering, the girl wheeled around, and almost ran against Martha, who was coming through the narrow entry.

"Dat you, Miss Matty?"

"Yes Tink. How do you do?"

"Right smart, Miss Matty. Jis gwine down stairs arter some wood for de gobness's fire."

"Look here, Tink"—catching hold of the negro girl's arm as she was about to shuffle down stairs—"the lady in the green-room is *Miss Edith*, and if you say *governess* again, I'll forbid Nelly speaking to you while she is here."

"Miss Edom, is it? I didn't know afore; I heard missus call her gobness, and I tot dat it was some gobner's lady."

"Now, Tink, you know that's a fib. But go about your business, and be smart with the wood."

"Isn't this horrid, Miss Edith? Green, greener, greenest!"—pointing to the curtains, wall, and carpet. "I'm glad that horrid green bedstead is gone!"

"Why was this room furnished thus, Matty?"

"Just Aunt Martha's fancy, I reckon," said Martha, taking the poker and writing in the ashes. "How do you like Aunt Martha?" she asked, with out looking up.

"I am not able to judge yet, dear," replied Edith.

"Well"—suddenly throwing down the poker—"I like her less than I ever did. Mary and I were always pleased to come here, because Christmas times Uncle Morgan always has so much fun going on. But we were never fond of Aunt Martha; she is so stiff; and I positively dislike her now."

"No, Matty, you do not dislike your aunt; you

are only a little offended because our rooms are not adjoining," said Edith, quietly.

"Yes, I know that I am offended at that; but 'I do hate a proud man, as I hate the engendering, of toads.' I read that in Shakspeare one day when papa left the book open on the table, and I thought of it to-day when"—she hesitated, and her manner became embarrassed.

"When what?" asked Edith, understanding what was in Matty's mind, but wishing to bring her to the point at once.

Martha looked up, and her face flushed; then she stooped and picked up the poker, and said, as she made a plunge at the ashes, "Why, when she spoke to you, Miss Edith"

"Matty," said Edith, sitting down and drawing Martha to her side, "I am glad, dear, that you have spoken frankly, and I will take this opportunity to tell you that I hope you will not allow your aunt's manner towards me to influence *your* conduct towards her in the least, for it would give me great pain to witness any disrespect or resentment on your part, and besides it would render my position here only the more awkward." Edith knew that this was the best argument she could use, and she was glad to see that it had the desired effect.

"Well, Miss Edith, I won't do or say anything to make you feel disagreeable; but I would like Aunt Martha and Nora to know that I haven't any of Aunt Martha's scornful pride, if I do look like her. I know," she added, understanding Edith's

significant smile, "I know, Miss Edith, that I *look* proud, but I never *feel* as Aunt Martha and Leonora *act*, except to them; I have a proud contempt for such people as they are, and indeed, Miss Edith, I must say it, it gives me pleasure to annoy them sometimes. And besides Miss Edith, Aunt Martha is from the north herself—Uncle Jacob married her in New York.

"Edith looked very grave, and shook her head.

"I understand now," continued Matty, "why papa did not wish us to come to Augusta this Christmas, and why he wrote to Uncle Morgan inviting him to bring his family to the Bluff; but Aunt Martha would not consent to any such arrangement, because Nora was promised a party on New Year's Eve; she will be eighteen then, and she is just precisely like her mother. Cousin Fred—he is twenty-two—is like Uncle Morgan; *they* are my style! So full of fun!—just the nicest people in the world. I reckon we'll have a nice time, after all." And she looked up with a smile.

"Yes, dear, I dare say the two weeks will pass pleasantly enough. You must not give yourself any uneasiness on my account, for I shall not allow your aunt's coldness to make me unhappy, I assure you. But where is Mary?"

"Getting dressed. Nelly was not ready to plait my hair, and so I ran over here. We are not going down stairs until you are ready."

"I will not be long dressing," said Edith. And she went to the table, which was covered with green chintz, and, taking her combs and brushes from a

traveling basket, she commenced to comb and arrange her hair. Tink came in with the wood, and soon had a cheerful fire built in the stove, and, taking the pitcher, shuffled out of the room and returned in about half an hour with water. Mary came in just as Edith's toilet was completed, and kissed her as affectionately as though they had been separated for a day; as they passed through the narrow dimly-lighted entry into the more spacious hall leading to the front rooms, she said, as she skipped along before Edith:—

"The front part of the house is so much pleasanter than the back. This is always our room"—throwing open the door of the room assigned to herself and Matty. "I wish there were two beds in here; then you could be with us."

"Yes, Miss Eden," said Nelly, who was plaiting Matty's hair, "it was right mean of Miss Morgan to put you in dat hole ob a closet; no nigger would sleep dar, I know. Dar, Miss Matty, it's did. Now put on your dress, honey."

"How do I look in this gown, Miss Edith? It feels very queer, so high up in the neck."

"You look very well, Matty; much better than in low bodies, and that white frill is very becoming, and looks neat." And indeed she looked much better than Edith had ever seen her. The snugly-fitting habit gave more symmetry to her figure, and the fine white cambric frills around the throat and short sleeves of the dress gave it a youthful appearance.

"Miss Nora hab done gwine down, Miss Mary,"

said Nelly, as Mary was about to rap at her cousin's door.

They are all in the parlor, I dare say, and Cousin Leonora will look at us, and bite her lips, and toss her head; I always dislike to go into the room when they are all together," said Mary.

"I don't then, for I can give as many tosses as Cousin Nora," returned Martha, stepping proudly across the hall, adjusting her jet bracelets, and glancing over her shoulder at the skirt of her dress, which quite touched the floor.

As Mary had predicted, the family were assembled in the parlor, and as their visitors walked up the long room to the fireplace, around which they were seated, an elderly gentleman arose, and extending both hands said, as he shook the girl's hands, and kissed them on the cheek in a demonstrative manner, "Glad to see you! Bless me, how you've grown, both of you! And you, Blush-rose, why you're as pink as ever, my little beauty!

And my buxom queen here is a woman grown, I declare! Stand off, Matty, and let me look at you! looks eighteen, by George! But where are all your freckles?"

"Gone to sour milk, uncle."

"Sour milk! Ha! ha! So, somebody has struck a vein of vanity? All right, Matty! don't blush, my dear, but bow to every pan of bonny-clabber you come across, for it's done a heap for your good looks." Then, advancing a step forward, he extended his hand to Edith and said, in a more quiet manner, "And this is?"

"Miss Edith Stanford, Uncle Morgan."

"Ah, Miss Stanford, I am pleased to see you." And he shook her hand warmly, and, turning to his daughter, said, "My daughter, Miss Stanford, my son—and—I believe you have already met with Mrs. Morgan."

His frank, open countenance and cordial manner had the effect of placing Edith quite at her ease, and she returned the lofty bow of Miss Nora with graceful self-possession, and smiled in recognition of Mrs. Morgan, who bowed, and murmured "Miss Edith," as if the fact of their having met an hour before had quite escaped her mind.

"My son," otherwise Mr. Frederick Morgan, was leaning against the mantle, twirling the ends of his heavy black moustache between his fingers, and gazing thoughtfully into the fire. When his cousins entered the room he turned and looked at his sister with a quick, inquiring glance, then, perceiving that she had no intention of going forward to receive them, he made a movement to do so himself, when his father suddenly started up and met them as I have described. Fred gave them a welcome equally as cordial if not quite as boisterous as his father's, and, when introduced to Edith, he bowed with a degree of deference and slight diffidence in his manner, which did not partake of his mother's hauteur or his father's familiarity, but which indicated that he recognized her as their equal; and, when she was seated on the sofa in conversation with his father, he scanned her face as closely as his mother had done, but there was noth-

ing rude or impolite in his gaze, but a degree of respectful admiration, which could not have offended the most fastidious.

Mary sat down beside Edith, and Martha stood before her cousins and entered into an animated conversation with them, while Mr. Morgan asked questions about the Bluff, and talked with Edith as unreservedly as though she were an old acquaintance. Mrs. Morgan held a small screen before her face, and, turning her head, examined her nieces with a critical eye, and then looked at her daughter with an expression of intense satisfaction. Leonora was a tall, dark looking girl, who, without having any claims to the term *beautiful*, was striking, stylish looking; she had that air of high breeding which as an outward show, usually distinguishes the members of a family of long established position and wealth, and which never fails to be recognized by the educated and refined, and is *generally* a passport in good society, even when not backed by wealth. She was elaborately dressed, and with her dark hair and flashing eyes looked very brilliant beside her fair-faced, simply-dressed cousin; but Leonora was eighteen, and Matty scarcely fifteen. Edith, who had noticed Mrs. Morgan's expression of countenance and divined that she was drawing comparisons unfavorable to Matty, thought, as she looked at the two, that three years would effect a wonderful change in the latter judging from the rapid development of her mind within the past few months, as well as the improvement in her personal appearance and increasing refinement of manner.

Wonderful, indeed! "Man proposes and God disposes."

"Martha," said Mr. Morgan, turning from the sofa and addressing his wife, "do you not think that Mary grows like her father?"

"*Grows* like him! why, she is his perfect image," responded Mrs. Morgan, and she looked at Mary with a very pleasant smile.

"A very lovely image, certainly," thought Edith, and she smoothed the brown hair caressingly. "But such an one will never create a sensation in society; she is one of those 'gems of purest ray serene,' whose brightest lustre is shed around the domestic hearth, warming the hearts of all who come within its influence. This little one is formed for love, not admiration'—and she pressed the little hand affectionately, which was laid so confidently in her own.

The parlor doors were thrown open suddenly, and "Dinner!" was announced by Christopher in a loud tone.

"Will Christopher never lose his hotel manners?" said Mrs. Morgan, as she arose and preceded the others to the dining room. "I don't know but we'll have to put him below, awhile, until he is subdued a trifle, for, I declare, I cannot tolerate him."

"Who are you speaking of, mother? Kit?" asked Fred.

"Yes! I advise your father never to get another servant from a hotel to put him in the house, for he gives it the appearance of a boarding-house."

"Come Fred, exert yourself for once, and escort

your sister and cousin into the dining-room," said Mr. Morgan, offering Edith his arm and taking Mary by the hand. "I'll tell you what it is, Matty, you'll have to stir Fred up while he is here, for he is abominably lazy."

"Yes, Matty," said Fred, moving from his place and putting out his elbow, "you must stir us all up, for we are insufferably dull."

Matty and Leonora darted past Fred, who said that Nora knew the way, and he would only take Matty, and, laughing at his look of astonishment, ran out through a side door.

"That's decidedly cool," said he, looking after them. "Mary, you take my arm, for I have it settled for some one, and it's a pity to go alone after taking that trouble." And he walked up to Mary, and, pulling her hand through his arm, walked quickly through the hall, saying that he felt considerably stirred up already.

During dinner, Mrs. Morgan and her daughter made the New Year's party the subject of conversation between themselves. Fred and Matty sat opposite to each other, and carried on a war of words. Edith sat beside Mr. Morgan, and was not addressed by any one save him and Martha, who made an occasional appeal to her to defend her against Fred's impudence.

"Just think, Miss Edith, he says that I weigh as much as Christopher. You oughtn't to allow me to be so insulted."

"I think you can defend yourself pretty well,

Matty," said Mr. Morgan. "Ask him what his own weight is."

"Witches' weight, I reckon," said Martha; and the laugh was turned against the young gentleman, who, like all thin people, was ambitious of being stout.

"Have you learned to play any, yet," asked Nora of Matty, when she and her mother had determined upon the arrangements for New Year's Eve.

"Yes, very well, indeed," returned Martha, glancing at Edith.

Fred opened his eyes and looked at his *opposite* with an expression that said, "Is it possible!"

"Indeed I *do* play *real well*, Cousin Fred," she said, tossing her head. "Papa thinks that I have learned ex-tra-or-din-a-ri-ly well," nodding her head at every syllable of the long adverb.

"Who is your music teacher?" Fred asked, forgetting, probably, that the governess taught music as well as other branches.

"My music teacher! Why, Cousin Fred, Miss Edith, of course; and that's the reason why I play so well, considering the little tuition I've had." Then, after a pause, she added: "Papa thinks Miss Edith is the best player and sweetest singer he ever heard."

"O Matty!" Edith could not help exclaiming, for she more than half suspected that Matty's zeal in her cause had led her to exaggerate the truth.

"Indeed, it's true, Miss Edith, for I heard papa tell Father Ward so last Sunday morning; the **very best** amateur performer that he ever heard."

And she looked at her aunt and cousin with a face that said, "What do you think of that?"

Neither of the ladies spoke, but looked curiously out of the window, though nothing of interest was to be seen in that direction. Mr. Morgan said—

"Ah, indeed! I hope Miss Edith will give us an opportunity to judge after dinner; we are all passionate lovers of music here; Fred, there, is at the head of all the musical soirees in the city; and Nora is no *bad* performer herself. I am very fond of music, and so is Mrs. Morgan, but neither of us professes to be a judge."

"Mr. Ellis overrates my abilities," replied Edith, though she did not forget that, as the best performer at B—— Seminary, she had carried off the prize from a score of competitors.

The ladies retired as soon as the cloth was removed, but the gentlemen lingered over their wine, and did not join them in the parlor until the chandelier was lighted. Mrs. Morgan had fallen asleep, and her stately head was nodding to the polished andirons when her husband and son entered the room. Martha and Nora were in the reception-room, and Edith and Mary were seated at the centre-table reading.

"Now, Mary, let us hear what you have learned! Play your best piece, and then we'll have Matty at the instrument," said Mr. Morgan, throwing himself on the sofa.

Mary hesitated, and looked at Edith. "Go, my dear," said Edith, and she sat down at the piano, which her cousin Fred opened, and after striking

the keys in an undecided manner at first, she felt more assured as Edith arose and stood beside her, and played through the simple piece without making any blunders.

"Capital! Why, Mary, you played like a professor!" said her uncle, patting her cheek. "Now we must have Matty at it." And calling his daughter, who came into the room followed by Martha, he said: "Come, girls, now is your turn! Mary has been entertaining us, and you must let us hear what you can do. Sit down, Matty, and then Nora will play some of her *fantasias*."

Without any hesitation or embarrassment, Matty seated herself at the piano, and after playing a short prelude, commenced singing a popular song. At the second verse, her uncle joined in, and sang it through with considerable fervor. Martha's voice was sweet and full, and she sang with more expression than many persons after years of study. Mrs. Ellis had taught her daughters all the rudiments of music, and Edith had found them farther advanced than she was led to expect from what their father had said. She put them at once to the learning of easy pieces; daily practice under her constant supervision had effected much. Contrary to Mr. Ellis's or Edith's expectation, Martha's application quite equalled her talent, and thus her progress had been facilitated.

Mary applied herself equally as well, and indeed often practiced an extra hour after the expiration of the time assigned to her; but she might give the greater part of her time to the study of music, and

become perfect mistress of the *science* but the *art* she would never acquire in any great degree, or by any amount of practice, become anything but a mediocre performer; for she lacked both the ease and taste that Martha possessed, and her touch was merely mechanical, like the act of the street performer's hand in turning his hurdy gurdy.

Mr. Morgan was quite enthusiastic in his applause of Matty's singing, and Fred patted her head in a patronizing manner and called her a "Nightingale," "Fat Swan," etc.

"Now, Nora," said Mr. Morgan. And the young lady sat down on the stool, spread out her dress and arranged her music before her, and with the air of a public singer commenced a cavatina in Italian, which seemed to be interminable, notwithstanding that her voice was good and she sang with considerable taste; but the accompaniment was *executed* without any mercy on the piano-strings, and whatever merit there was in her singing was more than counterbalanced by the defects in her playing. After the song was finished she pounded out some polkas and waltzes, which were perfectly *stunning*. Tea was announced, and she arose from her seat and looked as if she expected Edith to applaud her performance, but seemed satisfied with the look of surprise that was on Edith's face, and which she mistook for astonishment at her skill. Looking on her with rather more complacency, she said, "*You* will play after tea, will you not, Miss Edith?"—not doubting, however that she would decline after such a brilliant performance as her own.

"Yes," said Matty, "Miss Edith and Cousin Fred will both play." And she caught hold of her teacher's hand and looked up into her face, her eyes sparkling in anticipation of Nora's discomfiture.

Did you speak to me, Matty?" asked Fred, starting up and looking around as if slightly bewildered.

"You've been asleep, Cousin Fred, I declare! A pretty compliment to your sister's playing!" said Matty.

"'Pon my word, I haven't been asleep; but I was in Europe just then, and you called me home. What do you wish?"

"I wish you to play, after tea, on that instrument. Do you understand?"

"Oh! certainly, certainly. Anything more?"

"Yes. Come to tea." And, taking his arm, they went into the tea-room, which adjoined the parlor.

Christopher brought in some papers, and as soon as the tea things were removed Mr. Morgan and Fred were absorbed in the news. Mrs. Morgan became interested in a book of fashions, and Nora and her cousins returned to the parlor.

"Come, Miss Edith, won't you please play now?" said Martha, turning as she reached the door.

"Permit me to lead you to the piano, Miss Stanford," said Mr. Morgan, laying down his paper and starting from his seat.

Mrs. Morgan looked up with a cold smile, and, taking her book, followed them into the next room. Fred alone remained in the tea-room.

"Perhaps you can play some of my pieces," said

Nora. And she drew a large book from the stand, and laid it on the piano.

Edith was looking over some loose music, and, selecting a piece, said, "Do you play this, Miss Nora?"

"Let me see. O no! That's one of Signor Cavelli's pieces; nobody can play that creditably but himself.

It chanced to be Edith's *chef d'œuvre* in performance; and, placing the music before her, she commenced, to Nora's undisguised astonishment, what nobody could play but Signor Cavelli.

"Thank you, Miss Stanford," said Fred, who had entered the parlor very quietly, and was standing directly behind her. "Such music is a treat, after Nora's banging."

"You didn't go to Europe, then!" said Matty, mischievously.

"I only go to get rid of 'such notes as I never indorse;' when Nora begins to play, I'm off."

Mrs. Morgan had been called into the tea-room, and Nora had followed her mother without vouchsafing a word of thanks to Edith. Indeed the significant looks that passed between the mother and daughter indicated, not only that they felt no pleasure in the discovery that a governess excelled the daughter of the wealthy Georgian, but that they considered her superior attainments a personal insult to themselves.

"You positively must sing for us," said Fred, as Edith was about to rise from her seat.

"For me, Miss Edith," said Mr. Morgan. And

she complied, though unwillingly, for, with woman's instinct, she had discovered that her music did not give pleasure to the ladies; not belonging to that class of females who, in their desire to please the gentlemen, are regardless of the opinion of their own sex, she felt rather mortified at Leonora's abrupt departure from the room, instead of being elated at the involuntary acknowledgment of the excellence of her playing. She did not sing with her usual ability, for she felt the influence of the cold looks of Mrs. Morgan and her daughter, who could not, with any degree of politeness, remain in the tea-room when they were called by Mr. Morgan to come into the parlor and hear the song. The consciousness that she was doing her very worst did not add to her comfort, and when she had finished she left the instrument with a flushed face and embarrassed manner. Mr. Morgan complimented her singing in unqualified terms, and Fred pleaded for another, "just one more song." But she refused in a decided manner, and took a seat at the centre-table. With a look of disappointment, and a slightly indignant glance at Nora, Fred sat down at the piano, and played in a style so different from that of his sister that Edith was amazed that he did not correct her, instead of silently sanctioning her *hammering* out her music.

She did not know that Frederick Morgan and his sister were seldom together, and so utterly indifferent at all times that they never interfered with each other's pursuits; Leonora's peculiar style of playing had never met with either praise or censure

from her brother. Frederick was the senior by four years, and when quite young had been separated from his sister by being sent to school in a distant State, where he was visited by his parents semi-annually. He was naturally warm-hearted and affectionate in disposition, and when he returned home, at the end of three years, his heart was overflowing with love for his sister; but he found her grown to be a proud, selfish girl, who looked upon her brother as an interloper, and returned his affectionate embraces with coldness, and eyed him with suspicion. She made it a point to dispute with him on every occasion of his receiving more than ordinary attention from his parents, and every favor he asked of them she considered an infringement on her own rights. Thus, by her unsisterly behavior, she turned her brother's affection to disgust, and when he returned to school it was with no pleasing recollections of his sister, but rather with a feeling of relief at their separation. He *could* have loved a sister—one worthy the endearing name—with all that love, so pure and holy, which usually exists in this relation; he had often felt the need of a sister's sympathy, but had never turned to *her*, and the few letters that had passed between them while he was at college were cold, brief, and invited no confidence on either side; when he returned from college, and found Leonora as arrogant, overbearing, and selfish as when he left home, he kept aloof from her as much as possible. It was only on rare occasions that they spent the evening in each other's society, for Frederick

had formed other friendships, and passed his evenings away from home, with more congenial companions.

Would that every sister's mind could be impressed with the idea that *she* is her brother's keeper! that on her unwearied kindness and affectionate vigilance depends, in a great measure, his exemption from those vices so common among young men, so degrading in their tendency, and which, "when once they invade, bring with them such a frightful train of followers!"

Fred was still playing; Edith and Mary were looking over some engravings, and the others were in the tea-room unfolding some packages which Christopher had brought in, when the door-bell rang, and Nora entered hastily, saying, "That's Cavelli." In a moment, she was shaking hands with a dark-looking Italian, and Mrs. Morgan entered, and expressed much pleasure at seeing the visitor.

"My cousins, Miss Ellis, and Miss Mary Ellis, Signor Cavelli," said Nora.

He bowed to the young girls, and then his eye rested on Edith; but, with a shrug of her shoulders and quick elevation of her eyebrows, Leonora turned away, and, wheeling a large chair before the fireplace, sat down and motioned to the gentleman to be seated near her.

Frederick looked at his sister, and his eyes flashed and lip curled with an expression of intense scorn, and turning to Edith, said, "Signor Cavelli, Miss Stanford."

Edith's face had become crimson at the intentional slight offered her by Leonora, and when Fred intro-

duced the Italian, she looked up, bowed, and dropped her eyes instantly, and continued to look at the pictures before her.

Mr. Morgan came in in a few moments, and the conversation, which Leonora was monopolizing, became general; but Mrs. Morgan and her daughter studiously avoided addressing any remarks to Edith, and when a topic was introduced upon which there seemed to be a diversity of opinion, and Fred appealed to Edith to support him in his views, his sister abruptly changed the subject, and asked Cavelli if he would not play. This was a piece of rudeness that Mrs. Morgan could not countenance; for, though her pride would not allow her to receive a governess in her family as a visitor, to be treated as her daughter's equal, yet she would not encourage any acts of *vulgar* rudeness on the daughter's part that would forfeit her the title of lady; and when Cavelli declined playing, until after a while, she gave Leonora a look full of rebuke, and quietly resumed the conversation which had been interrupted.

Fred, who had been sitting on the sofa, drew a chair to the table and sat down beside Mary. Taking advantage of a pause in the conversation, he said, "Cavelli, I am thinking seriously of a trip to Europe. Wouldn't you like to bear me company?" And he eyed the Italian keenly.

"How soon?" asked Cavelli, without looking up.

"Next month," answered Fred.

"No, I believe not. I shall not return to Italy

before spring," he answered, glancing, with a smile, at Leonora. She returned the smile, and looked into the fire.

Fred looked at a picture intently for a few moments, then, with a very grave face, said, "I think I'll put Uncle Ellis into the notion of going; the trip would do him a world of good."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Matty. "And, pray, what would *we* do?"

"Stay at home," said he, looking into her face with a saucy smile.

"Humph! I reckon papa wouldn't *leave* us, and I know he wouldn't *take* us from our studies, when we are learning so fast."

"Pray, what are you learning?"

"*Everything*!"

"*Everything*?"

"Yes; I mean everything that is taught in schools."

"Geometry, trigonometry, sour milk, and long dresses," said he, with a provoking smile.

"And what is taught in *colleges*, I'd like to know? Geometry, trigonometry, smoke cigars, and look at the ladies."

"And dye his moustache!—that's reduced to a science, now," said Mr. Morgan, laughing heartily.

"And what do you do *out* of school hours, Matty?" asked Fred, after the laugh had subsided.

"I read a good deal," she answered.

"What? Haven't you finished the 'Life and

Adventures of Robison Crusoe'—that remarkable man—yet?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed, some time ago; and I would like to read some of De Foe's other works, but papa hasn't any," she replied, not ashamed to acknowledge that she liked the book. "But we read aloud now.

"Who do you mean by *we*?"

"Miss Edith, and Mary, and myself, and sometimes papa."

"And so you've formed an association for literary improvement. What do you call it? 'Beech Bluff Lyceum?'"

"We don't *call* it anything, but we think it very pleasant, don't we Mary?"

"Yes, and very profitable," Mary ventured to say.

"*Mew*, little puss!" said Fred, mimicking her tone, and putting his arm around her. Then, turning to Edith, he said, addressing her; "What kind of a collection of books has Uncle Ellis, Miss Stanford?"

"A very fine collection," returned Edith.

"Cousin Fred, why don't you call papa 'Uncle Jacob?'" asked Matty.

"He taught me to call him Uncle Ellis when I was a child, and I have always continued to do so," returned Fred.

"That was one of Ellis's whims," said Mr. Morgan, stopping in his walk up and down the room. "He told me once that he never could forgive the injury that was done him by his parents when they

named him Jacob. It is the nickname of Jake that is particularly offensive to him, I believe."

"It is not a very euphonious appellation, certainly," said Fred.

"Who would ever think of calling papa *Jake*?" exclaimed Matty.

They all laughed, for such a name was decidedly incompatible with the character and noble person of Mr. Ellis.

"What's in a name?" said Mr. Morgan, continuing his walk.

"A great deal!" said Fred, speaking very emphatically. "A rose by any other name would *not* smell as sweet—at least to me. A name is expressive of some character, and when misapplied the incongruity strikes us at once. Call a rose, *turnip*," and flourishing his arm across the table, he said, "Miss Matty, will you not accept and wear this turnip for my sake? Now, doesn't that sound ridiculous?" turning to his father.

"Of course!" replied his father; "because the name is associated in our minds with the vegetable, and the mention of the one suggests the idea of the other. On the other hand, it would be quite as absurd to invite Miss Matty to dine on roses."

"Very poetical," said Fred, laughing immoderately; but decidedly absurd, for, judging from her appearance, Miss Matty would prefer to dine on something more substantial."

Mr. Morgan was standing behind Mary's chair twining her thick curls around his finger; looking over into her face, he said—

"Well, beauty, what names do you like best?"
Looking first at her uncle, then at Edith, she said,
very innocently—

"*Edith and Ellis.*"

"Corresponding initials! Do you mean the two names together?" exclaimed Fred.

"Yes—no—any way." said Mary, comprehending from Edith's blushes and Matty's distressed look that she had made a blunder.

Fred's smile gave place to a look of vexation when he discovered Edith's embarrassment, and, rising from his seat, he said, "Come, Cavelli, give us some music!" And the unpleasant occurrence was soon forgotten in listening to Signor Cavelli's delightful playing.

After singing a duet with Leonora, Signor Cavelli took his leave, and a few moments after, Mrs. Morgan gave the signal for retiring.

"Let us go to your room for a few moments, Miss Edith!" said Matty, when they were in the hall.

"No, my dear, it is later than you usually sit up, and you must both go to bed and to sleep as soon as possible," and, kissing them, she proceeded to her own room. Closing the door, she dropped the curtains, and sat down in the small rocking-chair and took another survey of the apartment. By the light of the astral lamp which was burning on the table, the walls, ceiling, and furniture looked positively black, and she felt as if surrounded by the gloom of a subterranean vault. "I wonder if the fortnight will be as long, accordingly, as this day has been!" she thought, looking into the fire. "*A fort-*

night! it seems interminable, but I must submit," she said, aloud, and then, after a pause, during which she gazed steadily into the fire, she drew a long breath, leaned her head on the back of the chair, and said, "Longing already for the congenial atmosphere of Beech-bluff!" Another pause. "One more Christmas-eve, and the next I'll spend at home! *Deo Volente!*"

In the mean time Mrs. Morgan and Fred had remained in the parlor, and as soon as the door was closed upon the others, Fred threw himself on the sofa beside his mother, exclaiming, "mother, I am really surprised at your receiving Cavelli here on such intimate terms!"

"His mother was my most intimate friend," rejoined Mrs. Morgan;

"I know, and was killed by his father's neglect. I am inclined to think that he possesses all his father's vices and none of his mother's virtues, for I hear a great deal that is to his disadvantage."

"But, my son, you invited him to accompany you to Europe!"

"I know that I did, and for this very reason; he told me, several weeks ago, that he intended to return to Italy in the spring, and I wished to ascertain if he had really any intention of doing so. He had not, as I suspected, and, furthermore, he has no idea of sailing in the spring as he told me this evening."

"His father has written requesting him to meet him at Florence in May."

"His father! his father is a worthless, Italian

who supports himself by the *dice*, and if they *are* to meet it is for no good purpose, I'm confident. Old Cavelli came to this country at his son's age; taught music awhile and by deceptive arts and flattery inveigled one of his pupils—a young girl—into a private marriage with himself, took her to a foreign country, where after a few unhappy years, she died, neglected, and in poverty.”

“But that was not the son's fault,” said Mrs. Morgan, shaking her head gravely.

“Certainly not; but it was the husband's, the father of this young man, who, regardless of the solemn injunction of his dying wife, and forgetful of his own and his child's interests, withheld his son, when a bachelor uncle offered to adopt him; and even when this uncle went to Italy for the express purpose of bringing the child to America, the deep-rooted hatred which old Cavelli felt for his wife's relations, caused by their efforts to effect a separation between his wife and himself, and by their steady refusal to acknowledge *him*, made him spurn with insult the offer to adopt his child. But, though rancor then made him so relentlessly obstinate, he became mollified by want and disease, and after years of unbroken silence on his part, he sends his son over, at the age of twenty-one, to claim the once offered but rejected support; and here he remains, an idle, worthless fellow, possessing no value of character to recommend him, and no talents save what lies in his finger ends, and—” Fred hesitated.

“And what? I will hear you out, Fred, though

your language is rather stronger than I altogether approve," said Mrs. Morgan, with the most serene expression of countenance as if her son's strong language did not alter her opinion of the subject of their conversation.

Fred arose, and stood directly in front of his mother, and continued, with emphasis; "And, if I mistake not, he is doing credit to his father's tuition by playing the same game, in one point of which his father proved a winner."

"Fred, what do you mean?" Her serenity was all gone, and for a moment, her maternal fears were aroused.

"I mean, mother, that if I am any judge of signs and looks, those that pass between young Cavelli and Leonora are indicative of something more than ordinary friendship."

"You must be beside yourself, Frederick!" She spoke quickly, but in a low tone, and her voice and manner betrayed indignation as well as alarm. "What! Leonora marry a poor penniless Italian? *She*, the haughty daughter of one of the proudest, wealthiest families in Georgia! No, no, my son!"—an incredulous smile spread over her face as she laid her hand on her son's arm—"Your sister's pride will never bend to *any* thing; even *love* will be subordinated to it. I receive Cavelli kindly, out of regard to the love that once existed between his mother and myself, and Nora welcomes him cordially out of respect for me; nothing more, Fred, depend upon it."

"Mother, I am compelled to think that there is

something more, and, though I have never interfered with Leonora's affairs, I must do so now, and prevent, if possible, a step that would mar the happiness of her whole life. Father does not approve of Cavelli, and treats him with as much coldness as his courtesy will allow him to treat any one in his own house; but he continues to come here, nevertheless—and I have been a close observer—when he suspects that he is losing ground with you, he adroitly introduces his mother's name into the conversation, and draws upon your sympathies, which you think are all for the mother, but of which, in reality, you are making the son the immediate object; and Leonora—"

"She would never, *never* marry Cavelli!" exclaimed Mrs. Morgan, in a louder, more decided tone.

"Your *friend* was from a family as high in social position and as proud as ours. She was undoubtedly as haughty as Leonora; but she left home, friends, *every* thing for a poor adventurer, and learned from sad experience how one false step can make the misery of a lifetime, and your daughter may do the same."

"No, Fred, I cannot believe this; I know your sister better than you do, and I am convinced that she would never throw herself away, said Mrs. Morgan, rising and approaching the centre-table. "Your solicitude is very natural, very brotherly, but I think your personal dislike to Cavelli has influenced you, and led you to draw conclusions from actions, which in another you would regard as perfectly innocent. As long as he deports himself in

a gentlemanly manner in my house, he is welcome to visit here. It is the least I can do for poor Ellen's boy."

"And by so doing you peril your daughter. My belief as to Cavelli's designs is founded on the ground of satisfactory evidence, and that Leonora encourages him, is just as evident. I hope you will reflect upon this matter, and take measures at once to ward off danger."

"Well, Fred, I will not treat your suspicions, or convictions, whichever you please to term them, with indifference; but I will, to gratify you, be more circumspect in future; and if I discover any alarming symptoms, I will take Nora away until Cavelli has left the country. So good-night."

"One word more, if you please, mother," exclaimed Fred.

"What now? It is late," looking at her watch.

"One word respecting the young lady who is visiting here—Miss Edith," he added, in reply to his mother's severe look of inquiry.

"What of *her*, pray?"—and Mrs. Morgan seated herself on a chair near the door.

"This much, mother. She is entitled to more courtesy than has been accorded to her to-day."

"What more can she expect? Has she not been treated by me with perfect civility?"

"*Civility*, and nothing more, but something less by Leonora."

"You probably forgot that Miss Stanford is your cousin's *governess*, not a *distinguished* stranger."

"I do not forget, mother, that she is a stranger in

our city, and a visitor at our house, and should, therefore, be treated with the utmost courtesy; by her beauty, her polish of manners, and, judging from her proficiency in music, by her accomplishments also, she is fitted to grace any parlor that *I* ever entered, and to adorn any circle that I have ever met in these rooms. And then mother a very powerful appeal to our courtesy and sympathy lies in the fact of her being a *northerner* like yourself; I think she has a special claim upon us."

"I think it would be expedient for me to be circumspect with *you*, as well as with Leonora," said Mrs. Morgan, in a tone slightly sarcastic.

Fred did not change countenance, but commenced to drum on the piano with his fingers, and without making any direct reply to his mother's observation, he said: "We boast of our family *pride*; it strikes me that there is an inconsistency in receiving Cavelli, a man of no worth, an idle fellow living on his uncle's charity, with every mark of respect, and at the same time refusing to treat Miss Stanford—a perfect lady—with any degree of attention more than ordinary civility requires, simply because she maintains herself by her own talents."

"We will drop this subject for the present, Frederick," said Mrs. Morgan, once more rising to leave the room. "You know my views, and understand my feelings respecting *governesses*; I hope you will respect them, and not become too devoted to Miss Edith. I question whether she will feel the need of attention from your sister and myself, while you

and your father bestow so much upon her. Good-night."

Frederick sprang to the door, opened it, and his mother passed into the hall; he stood a moment looking thoughtfully at the polished door knob which he was turning with his hand, and then at the entrance of the servant to put out the lights he closed the door, and went to his own room repeating, in a half singing tone—

“—Learn for the sake of your soul's repose
That wealth's a bubble that comes and goes !
And that all proud flesh wherever it grows,
Is subject to irritation !”

CHAPTER XI.

HOLYDAYS.

LONG before light the following morning Edith was awakened by the black children screaming beneath her window "Christmas-gift," and "Christmas-gift," was taken up by voices in every direction, and shouted in every key from the heavy bass to the childish treble. She arose and lighted her lamp then admitted Tink who had come to kindle her fire.

"Christmas-gift, Miss Edom," said the black girl with a broad grin.

"Merry Christmas," returned Edith with a smile as she closed the door. The girl looked at her with a mystified stare not comprehending exactly the sense of the greeting.

"At what time do the family breakfast, Tink," asked Edith.

"Nine o'clock, 'um."

"Edith looked at her watch; it was not yet six, and dressing as quickly as possible she groped her way through the dark halls and rapped at the girl's door.

"Come in," said Matty, and entering she found both her pupils sitting up in bed.

"Oh it's Miss Edith"—"Christmas-gift," "Christmas-gift," exclaimed they both bounding out of bed.

"Now, if we hurry, we shall be in time for the seven o'clock mass."

"Don't you think we might get to confession? the Church is just over in the next street and it won't take us but a few moments to go there."

"That was my intention," returned Edith.

"I wish Nelly would hurry herself back," exclaimed Matty somewhat impatiently, as she gathered up her clothes and carried them to the grate where she warmed each article before putting it on.

"Never mind Nelly; I'll assist you to dress," said Edith, and when the girl made her appearance her young ladies were ready to go out.

"Why didn't you come up earlier Nell?" asked Matty.

"I tot dat you'd want to sleep arter being up so late las' evenin' and so I crept out de room slily arter making de fire."

"Well, now you must come with us to Church; Aunt Martha would be shocked if we went out so early without a servant."

"She'll say you'm crazy, any how; but I guess Miss Matty, we'll get back fore she's up and she need'nt know 'bout it; Miss Nora 'll larf you know."

"Need'nt know! Tink I am not ashamed nor afraid to have them all know, and I shall tell them myself," replied Matty with dignity.

Our little party found the church quite crowded but succeeded in getting to confession, and with full time for preparation, by waiting for the half-past-seven mass.

"How much we have to thank you for Miss Edith," said Mary on their return, "had you not prepared us we would not have made our first com-

munion, and to-day we could not have approached the sacraments. I do wish Uncle Jacob's family were Catholic."

"I judge they are not prejudiced," said Edith.

"Oh, no, not at all," chimed in Matty, "they only think it very foolish to go out fasting so early in the morning, and very unhealthy. Nora thinks it's *excess of devotion*. They never trouble themselves about religion one way or the other, except to go to church on Sunday and in doing that they think they have done their duty. But I don't believe any of them would do anything they thought to be *wrong*."

"Certainly not," said Edith.

"Are you going to late mass, Miss Edith?" asked Mary as they entered the house.

"I would like to go," she answered.

"So would I."

"And I too," said the girls eagerly.

"Very well, we'll see about it, if we can go without disturbing the arrangements of your Aunt—if not we'll make the sacrifice and stay at home."

"I wonder if Nora has any new things on the *etagere*," said Matty as they returned to the parlor after laying off their shawls and bonnets. The family were not yet visible, and only Christopher was in the parlor arranging the fire-screen.

"What a curiosity-shop!" said Edith, glancing up and down the shelves, "what is this made of?" taking up a yellowish-looking mat.

"Don't you know, Miss Edith?" exclaimed Matty.

"No, dear, I have never seen anything of the kind before," answered Edith; and Matty, with an animated face, proceeded to explain.

"I can tell you all about it," said she, taking the mat in her own hand. "Cousin Clarence brought it from India; it's made of *laccine*; in the first place, *lac* is a sort of gum or stuff produced on the banyan-tree, and contains five or six different kinds of resin, and when it is first collected it becomes hard and is called *stick lac*; and when that is melted it is called *shell lac*, it becomes like a thin crust, and this molasses-candy-looking stuff is made from that, and is called *laccine*; and that cabinet is lacquered or covered with varnish made of lac dissolved in spirits of wine. Doesn't it seem strange that this beautiful mat was once nothing but gum, running down a tree away off in India?"

"You remembered it all, didn't you, Matty?" said Mary, smiling.

"Oh, I knew I would," answered her sister, laughing; and turning to Edith, she said: "I'll tell you how I learned it. Cousin Clarence told it to me last Christmas, and said if I would remember it, he would give me a silver card-case this Christmas."

"I wonder if you'll get it, Matty!" said Mary.

"I reckon not; poor Clarence, he won't be here."

"Is your cousin dead?" asked Edith, concluding that he must be, from Matty's sad tone.

"O no! not dead, but"—and she looked around, as if afraid of being overheard.

"If it's a secret, Matty, you had better not confide it to me," said Edith.

"It is not a *secret*, but aunt don't like to hear it spoken of. Cousin Clarence is Fred's twin brother, and he is *insane* in the asylum at Savannah," she said, dropping her voice to a whisper.

"He has been there three years," said Mary, coming close to Edith; "but last Christmas he came home and was all right for two months, and then he became violent again, and had to be sent back."

"This is made of laccine, or shell lac, too," said Matty, taking a long chain in her hand; "doesn't it look like gold?" and throwing the golden-looking chain over Edith's head, it fell in a variety of graceful curves over the massive plaits of her dark hair.

"Good-morning! and a merry Christmas!" exclaimed Mr. Morgan, coming into the parlor evidently in a very jubilant mood. "Fred, look at this tableau vivant! Miss Edith and her pupils trying the effect of green and gold! The chain looks well over your black hair, and in contrast to your green dress!" said he, bowing to Edith, who was blushing and attempting to remove the frail ornament; but it had become entangled in her hair, and twisted around her comb.

"Allow me to assist you," said Mr. Morgan. But he found it a difficult matter to loosen it without breaking, and he called to Matty, who, with her sister, had chased their cousin into the hall, shouting "Christmas gift!" which he claimed on the ground of having saluted them first.

"Every bit of your hair will have to come down!" exclaimed Matty, in dismay. "Shall I draw out your comb?"

"Yes," answered Edith. And she bowed her head while Matty drew out the comb and unbraided her hair, which fell over her shoulders in a waving, heavy mass.

"Breakfast!" announced Christopher, introducing his head into the room, and disappearing as suddenly.

"I must go to my room. Come, Matty," said Edith, disliking to enter the breakfast-room alone. She held up her skirt, and ran through the hall, returning Fred's bow and "good-morning" with a blushing face and embarrassed manner. Nora was on the stairs; she gave Edith a look of haughty surprise, said "Christmas gift" to Matty, and passed them. Stopping before her brother, as soon as Edith and her cousin were out of hearing, she said:

"Is that the northern style of displaying a pretty foot and long hair? That young lady has obviously been studying *effect*!"

"No amount of study could accomplish that blush," answered her brother.

"Yankee ingenuity has taught her how to 'bid the cheek be ready with a blush," returned Nora.

"I think she would make her fortune by teaching the art to others," said Fred, his look and tone implying that his sister would not be unwilling to learn. They both passed into the breakfast-room

without having expressed a wish for the other's enjoyment of the merry season.

The family were seated around the table when Matty and Edith entered.

"You've missed the *grace*," said Mr. Morgan, laughing, and motioning Edith to be seated in a chair at his side.

"Did you say *grace*, uncle?" asked Matty with a surprised look.

"No my dear, *I* did not, but Nora, there, said it over her diamonds."

"Look at this superb set of diamonds that father and mother have given me!" And Nora handed the case to Matty.

"Did you find your presents, girls?" asked Mrs. Morgan.

"No aunt! Where are they?" asked Mary.

"I sent them up to your room last evening," returned Mrs. Morgan. And Mary started out of the room.

"They are watches!" exclaimed Matty, when her sister brought in two small velvet cases. And opening hers, she lifted a small Geneva watch, and examined it with delight.

"Did you buy them uncle?"

"Yes, Miss Mary, *I* bought them!"

"Mary, they are from papa! Look on the inside of the case."

"O Uncle Morgan!" said Mary, after reading the inscription.

"Well *I did* buy them, but your father commissioned me to do so," said her uncle, laughing.

"We are going to church, Aunt, Martha," said Mary, as they arose from the table.

"To church?" exclaimed Nora, "when your father is not here?"

"We are going with Miss Edith," answered Mary, quietly.

"Well, every person to his taste. I think it is the greatest bore in the world to go to church on a week day! I'm glad that I am not a Catholic, for that very reason." And she seated herself before the grate.

"We were at early mass and if it will interfere with your arrangements, Aunt Martha, we won't go again," said Matty bravely.

"Not in the least, go by all means."

"At what hour does divine service commence?" asked Fred, in a tone of mock solemnity.

"At half-past ten—

"It is ten now, and I think we had better be getting ready, don't you, Miss Edith?" asked Matty.

"Yes, dear, if your aunt will excuse us," replied Edith. And they left the room.

Nora looked after them, and, after reflecting a moment said to her mother, who was standing beside her; "Miss Edith is not a member of the Catholic Church.

"Yes, I reckon she is," said her mother.

"No, ma'am, she is *not*; it's a mistake; she belongs to the *Artful*! Why, mother, she was at church early this morning, and then she went down into the parlor, got up a tableau-vivant for father's benefit, and then ran through the hall, past Fred,

with streaming hair, evidently with the object of making an impression on the young gentleman; and now she's going to church again a beautiful example of piety, expecting, without doubt, that milord'll accompany her." She looked around to note the effect of her words upon her brother, who was standing with his back to her, looking out of the window. He did not notice her remarks, and she continued, addressing him directly: "I am glad, Fred, that you did not let your politeness run away with your judgment; I expected you would offer to escort the governess to church." He continued to drum on the window-pane, but said nothing. "Emily Owen is coming to-day. She looked at her mother, and they both looked at Fred, Leonora with a meaning smile and Mrs. Morgan with an earnest, anxious expression. His moustache went up contemptuously, but the announcement of Emily Owen's anticipated arrival produced not a word. The drumming continued, rather louder and quicker for a few moments, and then, putting his hands behind him he approached his mother, and said:—

"What time do we dine to-day, mother?"

"At four o'clock," replied Mrs. Morgan.

He took up a spoon, balancing it on his finger for a few moments, then turned to leave the room.

"You will be home to dinner, will you not?" his mother asked.

"Oh, certainly; I shall return with the girls."

"With the girls?"

"Yes, mother. Variety is the spice of life, and I think I'll vary the order of exercise for Christmas

day, and go to church with Matty. I may come out a wiser and a better man. *Au revoir!*" And, smiling, he left the apartment.

"Matty! That's a capital dodge!" exclaimed Nora. "I'll bet that he'll walk with Miss Edith." And she went into the parlor to watch them from the window.

"Where are you going, Cousin Fred?" asked Matty drawing on her gloves as she preceded Edith and Mary down stairs.

"If you will be very amiable, I will walk down the street with you," said he, tapping his boot with his cane.

"If I will permit you to do so, you mean. It is not often that you can be seen in such good company, and you must appreciate the honor."

Nora was at the window, and Fred, suspecting her motive, walked with Matty, out of consideration for Edith, whose position with regard to his mother and sister he did not think would be rendered any the more agreeable by particular acts of attention on his part coming under their observation.

They walked on briskly for some time; then gradually slackened their pace, and Fred, addressing some remarks to Edith, fell back, and walked by her side. Without giving much thought to the subject, Edith had regarded him as a flippant, good-natured sort of a person, not having a very large stock of brains, and nothing particular to recommend him save his affability and politeness. She was surprised, therefore, to find him extremely intelligent; and, after the weather and other topics

of general interest had been discussed, and the conversation took a higher tone, she was astonished at the extent of information which he seemed to possess with regard to European affairs, society abroad, the political condition of both countries, etc., subjects which had been suggested by the mention of his anticipated European tour, but which, from his general manner and conversation, one would have supposed foreign to his daily experience.

When they reached the church, Fred said: "I will go in, if you think I will not disturb your devotions."

"Come in, by all means, Cousin Fred," said Matty, with an approving smile.

It was the first time Edith had the opportunity of being present at high mass since she had been from home. At the church near the Bluff the want of music necessitated low mass, and for the privilege of having even that the Catholics in the neighborhood were only too thankful. As the powerful tones of the organ burst forth in joyous peals, tears came unbidden to Edith's eyes; every note seemed to speak of home, and friends, so distant, and all her prayers were for those loved ones who would miss her beyond all expression on that day, ever the gladdest, merriest of all the year. But she was united with them in spirit, in the presence of that Blessed One, who rests upon the myriads of altars dotting like stars this broad earth, and before which no true Catholic heart however weary, wandering, and desolate ever fails to find itself at home. Here

all is supplied—home, friends, kindred, refreshment, peace and rest.

Edith found it thus, and when she issued from the church her countenance was radiant and beautiful; she was in love and charity with all the world, even her haughty hostess and her daughter who made the very atmosphere around them cold, and their elegant mansion uninviting; she felt their haughty coldness all the more since she knew that Mrs. Morgan was from her own clime, tho' it had been years since she came south. Universally well received as Edith had been by Mr. Ellis' large circle of friends in the neighborhood of the Bluff, and the recipient of the most flattering attentions, she could not but feel keenly the pointed superciliousness of the one whose cordial kindness she felt she had the most claim upon. But, she said to herself in all humility that she needed the discipline as a counterpoise to the too great complaisance with which she was treated by all others. At the church yard gate Fred parted with them, saying that he had enjoyed the music, and now that he knew where fine singing was to be heard, he should be present frequently.

"A much more sensible way of passing Sunday morning, than at the club," said Matty bidding a farewell.

"Where's Fred?" asked Nora, when they entered the parlor, after leaving their bonnets up stairs.

"He went down to the reading-room to look over the papers," answered Matty.

"Gone down there to smoke, more likely; that's

what his *religious* fit will end in!" said Leonora, pointedly though in a pleasant tone.

"Smoke and religion! Ha! ha!" exclaimed a voice in the tea-room. "How de do, girls? I'll come in and look at you, directly." And, in less than a minute, a figure came bounding into the room, with outstretched arms, and embraced Matty and Mary; then, without waiting for an introduction, extended her hand to Edith, saying: "I'll not stand upon ceremony, Miss Edith, for I've known you ever since you've been South."

Edith's face expressed her surprise.

"It's a fact! Come over here to the fire-place, and I'll tell you what kind of an acquaintance we've had together." And, pulling Edith to a seat, she threw herself on the rug, and continued: "You know Mr. Acton?"

"Yes, certainly; he was my com—"

"I know," interrupted the stranger; "he was *your* companion for a few days; he is *my* companion for life: in other words, he is my other half, or three-quarters, for he is twice as old and large as I am, which is all very right and proper."

"Why, Emily! you married?" exclaimed Matty, holding her breath in astonishment.

"Yes, honey; I am joined in the *holy* bonds of wedlock, and a *hole-y* institution wedlock is; one can easily slip through the meshes in this country of divorces, and I think I'll be legally dissolved, for it's a great nuisance to have a man's boots kicking about your room!"

"But when were you married?" asked Matty, scarcely recovering her breath.

"You'll learn all that in good time, if you listen. Now, Miss Edith, I'll go on with my story. Well, Mr. Acton, after he left *you*, went to Havana to see *me*. We had intended to be married next fall, but while he was there we concluded to bring the courtship to a close, for he has been in New York nearly all the year, and it's a great bore to court such a distance apart; and, besides, I'm the most miserable correspondent; hate letter-writing; and mother had to answer all his letters, which did not seem to please him (though I've heard papa say that she writes splendid letters); and so I consented to be married as soon as he returned from Florida, and go to New York for our bridal tour, which was quite a piece of economy, as he had to go there any way, you see."

"But when were you married?" persisted Matty.

"Two weeks ago, honey, and without letting the good people here know anything about it; for you must know, Miss Edith"—casting her eyes at Nora, and looking very mischievous—"you must know that Mrs. Morgan and Nora there had dedicated me to Fred, who very naturally detested the sight of me, because I was always being poked under his nose. Weren't they enraged when I arrived this morning with my spouse! But I've been quite jealous of *you*, Miss Stanford"—starting to her feet suddenly; "really, quite jealous."

"Of *me*!" exclaimed Edith.

"Yes *me*! and I called you names several times,

for William was everlastingly talking about Miss Stanford, and wondering how you got along, and if you liked Beech Bluff, etc., until I more than half suspected that he was in love with you"—and then, sinking her voice to a very audible whisper, she said with a look of arch delight at the extent of her knowledge—"I know all about Charles Howard!"

Edith colored, but said nothing; Nora eyed her sharply, and Emily, resting her head against the mantle, looked serious for a moment, then continued: "I am right down glad that you gave him his walking papers!" Edith looked astonished and distressed, but the volatile tongue ran on. "He'll catch a tartar when he marries Ellen Acton, if she is beautiful. She is William's niece, and he says that she is very fond of admiration, and is of a dreadfully jealous disposition; and three or four years ago, when she and Mr. Howard met in Europe, they became engaged; but she broke the engagement, because she heard after he came home that he was paying very particular attention to a certain young lady in B——," and the tormentor opened her eyes and nodded her head at Edith in a significant manner.

Edith felt distressed at these disclosures before her pupils, but she remained silent, fearing that if she made any remark, it would only encourage Mrs. Acton to be more communicative. She was hoping that nothing more would be said on the subject, and, to avoid it, was about to address a remark to Matty, when the little lady suddenly broke out again—

"William thinks that Mrs. Richards had a finger in the pie, and sent for Ellen to visit B——, in the hopes of renewing the engagement between her and Charles Howard! I wonder if they'll call me Aunt Emily!"

"You! why you are only two years older than I am, and you don't seem one bit older than when we used to play here together," said Matty.

"Yes, but I am, though; and I'm improved, too, for I don't quarrel any more, and I give up all my playthings. You know we never got along very amiably together."

"There's Fred!" exclaimed Nora, as the front door opened and closed with a loud noise.

"Tell him I'm married, or he won't speak to me!" said Emily, catching hold of Nora's dress.

"Ah, Em! how de do? I'm glad to see you!" and Fred grasped her hand in a most cordial manner.

"Right well, hon—Fred, I mean! and I'm *married*! not that I'm particularly glad of it, but I think *you*'ll be!"

"I know it, Emily; I met your husband with father. Allow me to congratulate you!"

"As much as you please! but I fancy you congratulate yourself the most; you never gave my hand such a friendly grasp in your life!" and they both laughed heartily, continuing to shake hands and congratulate each other.

Emily—or Mrs. Acton—was of a petite figure, firmly proportioned, and very graceful and sylph-like in her motions, and possessing soft blonde ringlets and a pearly skin, which, together with her

juvenile manners and childish voice, made her appear even younger than sixteen.

Mr. Morgan returned with Mr. Acton, who evinced the greatest pleasure on seeing Edith, and at dinner begged Mrs. Morgan to alter her arrangements and allow him to sit between his wife and Miss Stanford. Mrs. Morgan, whose manner seemed to have thawed considerably, though the *governess* was still a thorn in the flesh, granted the request, and he sat down with his wife and Edith on either side of him. Mr. Acton entered at once into conversation with Edith; talked about their friends in B——, and revived reminiscences of their journey, Mrs. Acton bending forward to catch the joke and laugh with them. Gradually throwing off the restraint that had made Edith appear to a disadvantage, though never *awkward*, she became her natural self, and looked so animated and charming that even Mrs. Morgan's unwilling eye rested on her in admiration.

The three succeeding days were spent in a perfect whirl of excitement; driving and walking in the daytime, visiting all the objects and places of interest in and around Augusta; and the evenings were passed at public places of amusement, of which there seemed no dearth. On the morning of the fourth day, Mr. and Mrs. Action took their leave, amid many expressions of regret, none more sincere than Edith's.

Whatever had been communicated to Mrs. Morgan and her daughter respecting Edith, there was a very perceptible change in their deportment towards

her; they paid her more attention, and it was evident that she had risen in their estimation.

It was the morning before New Year's; the young folks were assembled in the parlor arranging the flowers that were to decorate the rooms on the occasion of Nora's party. Edith's taste had been consulted, and she was filling vases and directing the girls where to place them.

"Where is that gum shell-lac chain?" exclaimed Matty, setting a vase on the *etagere*.

"Isn't it there?" asked Nora.

"No; and I want it to wind around this bust of Jenny Lind."

"It must be there under some of the ornaments, Matty," answered her cousin.

"Indeed, it is not. Christopher was in here polishing the andirons; I'll ask him if he has seen it." And, going to the door, she called the colored man.

"No, Miss Matty, I habn't seen it in here, but I sawd it up in massa Fred's room tree days back."

"In your master Fred's room!"—going to the door with a piece of music in her hand. "What's possessed him to take it? it belongs to me. Go up and get it, Christopher."

"P'raps massa won't 'low it, Miss Nora," answered the man, looking rather dubious, and twirling his hat in his hand.

"Do as I bid you!" said Nora, sharply, stepping a pace forward and stamping her foot, then drawing herself up to her full height she returned to the piano and awaited the servant's appearance.

"Can't find 'um no whar! done gwine Miss!" said

Christopher, entering and approaching his young mistress with a very uncertain gait and manner.

Looking at him a moment, an angry expression settled over her face; then, as if the negro were the offending person, she ordered him, in no very gentle tone, to "leave the room."

Nora's good-humor was gone for the morning; she jerked her music, threw down a vase of flowers in one of her sudden movements, and then, in raising the piano cloth to prevent the water from running on to the carpet, she dropped a note which she held in her hand into it, neither of which accidents tended to soothe her irritation. She called one of the servants and scolded her for carelessness when she accidentally brushed a piece of music with the towel with which she was saturating up the water. Tearing up the note, she threw the pieces into the fire, and was leaving the room with a very unamiable expression of countenance, when the door-bell rung. She listened intently for a moment; as the parlor door opened, she advanced and received Cavelli with one of her most bewitching smiles. So sudden and so complete was the transformation, that to Edith, so unaccustomed to such scenes, she appeared as if suddenly touched by a fairy's wand; and one who had not witnessed the turbulent state of her temper a few moments previous would have doubted had he been told that aught had occurred to ruffle its sweetness. She bowed gracefully, and returned his "Happy New Year" with all her elegance and polish of manner, and after he had passed the compliments of the season with the "young

ladies," she motioned him to the sofa, and sat down herself.

"I have come to bring my regrets, Miss Nora," he said, handing her a bouquet of rare exotics. "Circumstances prevent my being present this evening, but—"

"Why, *of course* you'll come!" exclaimed Nora, interrupting him.

"I am sorry that I am to be deprived of that pleasure," he replied in his soft accents. "I received a telegram this morning announcing the dangerous illness of a friend in New York, and requesting my immediate presence."

"How excessively annoying! But when will you return?" Nora asked, in a tone of vexation.

"Just as soon as possible. If I find that dissolution has taken place when I arrive there, I shall return immediately." Then, sinking his voice, he murmured a few words and left the room, accompanied by Leonora. She did not make her appearance again until dinner-time, when her good-nature seemed perfectly restored, and she laughed and chatted with Edith quite familiarly.

"I have made out my programme for this evening, and I hope the performers will acquit themselves creditably," said she, gayly.

"Performers! Whose services have you engaged?" asked her father, with a smile.

"Well, let me see! There's Miss Elton, she'll play and sing, of course; and—Miss Edith, you'll sing, will you not?"

"Certainly, if my doing so will give you any

pleasure," replied Edith, somewhat surprised at the sudden clearing off of the clouds.

"That's right! Your music will give decided *éclat* to the *performance*," replied Nora, gayly.

"Who else, Nora?" Mr. Morgan asked.

"Fred, of course. The gentleman is absent when the roll is called; but we depend upon him, and hope he'll be accommodating."

"Cavelli, I suppose?"

"No, sir. Cavelli has gone to New York; he left his adieus with me this morning."

"The mischief he has! What has called him there so suddenly?"

"The illness of a friend."

"And couldn't stay to your party?"

"No, sir," answered his daughter, with a faint blush.

"How many letters are you to receive a day, Nora?" asked Matty, mischievously.

"Not one, my dear," said her aunt, before Nora had time to reply. And, looking at Nora with a satisfied smile, as if confident that her daughter would not disregard her wishes, she continued—"Your cousin knows that I do not approve of a correspondence. Nora did not look up, but continued to run her pencil over the paper which she called the "programme."

"You did not name yourself, Cousin Nora," said Mary.

"No; Cavelli actually had the impertinence to tell me not to disgrace my music master by *banging* to-night, and, as I shall be otherwise engaged, I

shall not play at all. He thinks my style needs taming down, and he is going to take me in hand as soon as he returns," she said, laughing, as they arose from the table.

"Taming down!" thought Edith. "What an influence he must have acquired over her to have effected such a wonderful taming down of her style already!"

"And so you have changed your mind about keeping Miss Stanford in the corner," said Mrs. Morgan, entering the dinning-room, and closing the door.

"Yes, mother."

"But I do not think it was altogether politic in you to propose her singing; that will introduce her at once to the notice of the whole company, and, if left by herself, she might pass unobserved."

"Never, mother; she is too handsome and distinguished-looking, and besides, papa would drag her awkwardly into notice, and we had better take her under our own wing; she has completely bewitched papa and Fred."

"Ay, there's the rub—your brother!"

"I am not at all alarmed on his account since Mr. Acton told us that she refused that Mr. Howard, who, he says, is the handsomest man he ever saw, besides being very wealthy. With all Miss Edith's quiet ways and apparent *unconsciousness*, it's my opinion that she understands her own attractions, and puts a proper value on them, and is reserving herself for some high position," said Nora ironically.

"I certainly never saw Fred so much interested in any lady before," said Mrs. Morgan, without noticing her daughter's remarks, "and she certainly is very interesting, very lovely.

Notwithstanding Mrs. Morgan's apparent incredulity when warned by her son of a secret love existing between Leonora and Signor Cavelli, yet she did experience a feeling of uneasiness which had amounted to positive anxiety when she was inexpressibly relieved by Cavelli's sudden departure. But from an anxious state of mind on her daughter's account she was thrown into a state of perturbation by her son's increasing devotion to Edith, and the announcement of his intention to spend Easter week at the Bluff, and, in consequence, a deferring of his European tour. She had become so thoroughly alarmed that she had concluded to speak to her brother-in-law on the subject, and request him not to encourage a visit from his nephew. By keeping Edith "in a corner," by making her a neglected wall-flower, Mrs. Morgan had believed that she would appear awkward and out of place; and, as her son had often declared that he never would marry a woman who appeared to a disadvantage in society, she had hoped that he would be thoroughly cured of his *penchant* for the governess. But now that Nora (to whose whims Mrs. Morgan always yielded) had signified her intention of bringing Edith "out," she was actually in despair; for, conscious that she would appear to the very best advantage, particularly at the piano, she expected that Fred would become a fixture at her side. In making their ar-

rangements, Mrs. Morgan and her daughter had decided that Matty should stand with Nora at one end of the room, while Mary and her aunt, with Mr. Morgan, were to occupy a position near the door to receive the guests as they entered. It afterwards occurred to Mrs. Morgan that by this arrangement Edith would be left to Fred, who she did not doubt would form a committee of reception in another part of the apartment, a feature which she did not consider as at all desirable; and, to obviate this difficulty, she requested Fred to stand with his sister and cousin. She had just made the request, and was congratulating herself on her able generalship, when the door of the tea-room, where they were assembled, was thrown open, and Mr. Ellis entered. Matty and Mary, with a scream of delight, bounded to receive him; with difficulty he released himself from their embraces, and advanced to receive the welcome of the others. After shaking hands warmly with Mr. and Mrs. Morgan and his niece and nephew, he looked around the room, and a shadow settled on his face. Matty, who understood her father's countenance, hastened to explain.

"Miss Edith will be down in a moment, papa; she is fixing the trimming on my dress. Nora is going to have a party this evening, and Mary and I are going to wear purple sashes and bows and white dresses. The dress-maker didn't fix them to Miss Edith's taste, and she has been the whole afternoon altering them. Here she comes, and I reckon she don't know that you are here—see what she'll say." And Matty looked with a pleased, eager face to-

wards the door, which opened and admitted Edith, who, without noticing Mr. Ellis's presence, walked quietly to her seat, beside Mr. Morgan.

"Why, Miss Edith!" exclaimed Matty, in a tone of vexation and surprise.

Edith looked up quickly, and her face became perfectly radiant with astonished pleasure on beholding Mr. Ellis. His eye was fixed on her face, so sweet in its quiet repose as she walked to her seat, and the sudden electrical change that passed over it on discovering his presence produced a flush in his own cheek, and rendered the meeting somewhat embarrassed on both sides. Edith apologized for not observing him when she entered the room, and, regaining her wonted composure, she inquired after his people at the Bluff.

"Come my son," said Mrs. Morgan to Fred, who, according to his usual custom when annoyed, had walked to the window, and was drumming on the glass, "come; we must have tea over, and adjourn to our dressing-rooms." He took his seat, and, with his usual lively manner, said:—

"Well, uncle, you have arrived just in time for the frolic."

"I don't know about that, Fred," returned Mr. Ellis; "I have important business to transact this evening, which may detain me down town until a late hour. You know I am very bashful (with a smile), and I could not summon courage to enter the room alone, after all the guests have assembled."

"I'll wait for you, papa!" exclaimed Mary.

"And miss your lesson in receiving company? No, that will not do," said Mrs. Morgan.

"Here is Miss Edith, Ellis," said Mr. Morgan. "I believe she is the only one who has not been pressed into the receiving service; she will come out and escort you into the room."

"Very well, Miss Edith," said Mr. Ellis, without waiting for a reply from her. "You can *wait* for me until ten o'clock, and if I am not here at that time, Fred must be *your* escort."

"With pleasure," returned Fred.

Mr. Ellis had discovered at once that Edith was on a sociable footing with the family, and, feeling relieved of some anxiety on that score, his spirits rose proportionately.

"I believe I have some letters for you, Miss Edith," said he, as she was about to leave the room with the girls; and he handed her a package, saying, "You can read them while you wait for me in the library."

The blushes and embarrassment attending the meeting between her brother-in-law and his daughters' governess did not escape the observation of Mrs. Morgan. "She must not be put in Mary's place, either," she said to herself, while she poured out the tea; then glancing at her son as he took his seat at the table,— "I must balk them both by making it apparent to each that the other will win."

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL—AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

"Ah, ha !

There's mischief in this man."

"And he, repulsed (a short tale to make),
Fell into silence, then into a fast ;
Thence to a watch ; thence into a weakness ;
Thence to a lightness ; and by this declension
Into the madness wherein now he raves."

"There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder."

AFTER assisting the girls to dress, and bestowing a reasonable amount of praise on their dresses and appearance, Edith took up her light to proceed over to her own apartment.

"How do you like my dress, Miss Stanford?" asked Nora, issuing from her room, dressed in the most elaborate evening toilet. It was a style of dress that Edith never would have selected for herself under any circumstances ; but she could not but admire it on Leonora Morgan, to whom a combination of rich colors seemed as natural and appropriate as to her own southern flowers. The flash of her diamonds added materially to the brilliancy of her appearance, and, as she turned herself around and viewed her dress in the mirror, a look of satisfied vanity settled over her countenance ; with a movement peculiar to herself, she threw back her shoulders and turned to leave the room without bestowing even a glance on her cousins.

"And don't we look nice, too?" asked Martha, turning herself around exactly as her cousin had done. It was a rule of Nora's *ethics* never to increase a person's self-esteem by compliment or praise; but, on the contrary, to diminish it as much as possible by bestowing a very moderate allowance of approbation, accompanied by a tone and manner indicative of unwillingness to condemn, leading the person to infer that she did not approve, but was reluctant to express her real opinion. In accordance with this rule which she had adopted, and by which she designed, not only to make her companions dissatisfied with themselves, but to increase their admiration of her by leading them to draw comparisons to their own disadvantage, she deliberately surveyed her cousins from head to foot, and then, in a drawling tone, hesitating between the words, she replied:—

"Ve-ry—well, I reckon—you'll *do*." And, with a stereotyped smile which she always assumed when going into company, she went down stairs.

Poor artless Emily had frequently been made to suffer the greatest uneasiness, and for whole evenings to fidget in a state of uncertainty regarding her appearance by her friend Nora's non-committal way of answering the question "How do I look, Nora?" which was sure to be followed by the pettish exclamation, "I *do* wish, Nora Morgan, that I could dress with as much taste as you do!" But Matty, who did not lack in penetration, understood her cousin perfectly, and merely smiled.

Mary, however, began to fidget like Emily, and

examined the bottom of her dress as if she suspected something wrong. "Isn't my dress too short, Miss Edith?" she said, after a series of evolutions before the glass.

"No, my dear. Does it look too short in the glass?"

"No, but I thought it must because Nora looked at it so queer."

"You little goose!" exclaimed Matty, "don't you know that she does that on purpose to make you think you don't look well? Humph! if you are going to mind her looks, you'll make yourself miserable, as Emily used to do"—opening the door and imitating as she did so her cousin's somewhat affected manner, she looked back at Edith, and laughed, saying, "Is that the style?"

Edith shook her head gravely, and followed them to the stairs, where she watched them descend to the brilliantly lighted apartments below.

"What! not dressed yet!" exclaimed Fred, looking up from the foot of the stairs.

"Plenty of time; you know I am to wait for your uncle."

"I am going on duty now, but I shall go over to the library at precisely ten," he returned, laughing, and disappeared to join his sister.

Edith's wardrobe did not display a great variety of dresses, but those she possessed were rich, and suitably trimmed. She selected those colors which harmonized best with her complexion and those patterns best suited to her tall, slight figure, and

therefore she always appeared dressed in the perfection of good taste.

Having arranged her hair in heavy drooping plaits, she put on a dress of rich pearl-colored silk, and over her neck a berth a of soft lace. "What an affectation of simplicity!" she thought, looking into the glass; and, taking a bouquet which Fred had given her, she separated the flowers, and, placed some of them in her hair and the rest on the bosom of her dress; glancing into the glass, she gave no farther thought to her toilet, but took her fan, gloves, and letters, and descended to the library. Drawing a chair to the table, on which was a large Argand lamp, she proceeded to read the long pages from home. She had glanced over them before dressing, to satisfy herself that all were well, but now she read them leisurely, and after she had finished sat with her head resting on her hand. She had remained in this position some time, when the door opened cautiously, and a figure entered the room; it was that of a man whose garments looked stained and travel-worn, and whose face wore a wild, anxious expression. He hesitated on seeing Edith; then advanced a few paces in a stealthy manner, peering around as if trying to get a view of her face, for she was sitting with her back to the door; then he stopped a moment, clasped his hands, and, as she suddenly turned around, prostrated himself at her feet. She started up, exclaiming, "Who is this?"

"Your royal highness's most humble servant!" he answered, in a very low tone.

She looked at him in astonishment, but not in affright, and as he assumed a kneeling position and looked up into her face, she moved from him, and, in a tone of extreme indignation, said, "Mr. Morgan, if you are in trouble, and I can assist you, state to me in what way I can be of assistance, but do not assume that position."

"I have come to escort your majesty to the banqueting-halls," he said, in a loud tone, rising to his feet.

Edith's face became deathly pale, for the voice was not that of Frederick Morgan, whom, in the uncertain light, she supposed her visitor to be. But, with a wonderful effort, she controlled herself, and, instead of making an out-cry, said, in a stern voice: "Not in that garb. Leave the room!"

He bent his head in servile obedience, and, bowing and cringing, walked to the door without turning his face from Edith and without raising his eyes from the floor; when he reached the door, he threw it wide open, and with another low bow darted up the stairs, and disappeared in the little entry leading to Edith's room.

She sprang to the door, closed and locked it, and, looking around as if she expected to see an apparition in every corner, she dropped into a chair, exclaiming, "Oh, it's CLARENCE, the maniac brother!" Then she started up, trembling in every limb, her eyes fairly dilating with terror when the door at the other end of the apartment opened, and Mr. Ellis entered.

"Oh, I am *so* glad you've come! I thought it

was *he!*" she exclaimed, sinking again into her chair.

"He looked at her white face a moment, then said, in surprise—

"Miss Edith, what's the matter?"

"*Clarence* has been here."

"CLARENCE! Good heavens! But where is he now?"

"Gone over to the green room."

"I must call Frederick! Will you wait here?"

She nodded, and he proceeded towards the door, when some one outside attempted to enter.

"There he is again! that's *he!*" Edith almost screamed, holding on to Mr. Ellis's hand to prevent his opening the door.

"Who's there?" he asked, in a loud tone.

"That's cool!" answered Fred, and Mr. Ellis immediately unlocked the door.

"Oh, I beg your pardon! I do not wish to intrude," he said, stiffly turning to go down stairs again.

"Come in, Fred; this is no time for nonsense. Miss Edith has had a rather dangerous visitor," he said, closing the door.

"A dangerous visitor?" his eyes fixed on Edith.

"Your brother Clarence!"

"Good heavens! What's brought him? how did he escape?"

"God knows! But, Fred, you must go over to him immediately."

"Where is he?" asked Fred, looking at Edith, with a face as white as her own.

"He went into the entry leading to my room," she answered.

"Your room? where's your room?"

"The green room!"

"Who put you into the green room?" he asked in an excited tone, while an angry flush passed over his face.

"Your mother, of course. Don't become so excited, but go over to your brother and prevent his appearing below," answered Mr. Ellis, taking hold of his nephew's arm.

"Yes, I'll go; for I am the only person here who possesses any influence over him. But, uncle, you go down; and Miss Edith, I beg of you to make an effort and go, too; and do not lead mother to suspect that anything is wrong!" And he hurried from the room.

"Clarence will be safe in Fred's hands," said Mr. Ellis, opening a small closet and producing a decanter of wine. "Drink this, Miss Edith; it will revive you," said he, handing her a wine-glass.

She took it without hesitation, and drank the contents of the glass; its effect soon became apparent in the returning color of her cheek and the brightness of her eye; and in a few moments she left the library, chatting in the most animated manner. Mr. Ellis knew that her gayety was not natural, but he had never seen her look so lovely, or appear so charming, and he was not surprised at the buzz of admiration that greeted them as they walked through the long parlor and stood by Nora, after speaking a few words to Mr. and Mrs. Morgan.

"I am so glad that you have brought Miss Stanford, uncle! for it's quite eleven, and we have had nothing but dance music yet; and Miss Edith, you'll break the ice for some of the others, will you not?"

"Not just yet, Nora," answered Mr. Ellis; "you must wait until we have recovered ourselves, after walking up this long room. I felt excessively abashed at being the cynosure of so many eyes, and Miss Edith did not bear the ordeal with equanimity, I am certain," he said, looking with a smile at Edith and Matty, who were laughing at the idea of his being abashed.

Mr. Ellis was well known and highly esteemed in Augusta, and as many of his friends were present, he was soon surrounded, and finally carried off into the tea-room to join a *coterie* of gentlemen there. Nora, with the most graceful politeness, introduced Edith to her friends, and her expectations were not disappointed, for being entirely *au fait* of all the amenities of society, Edith soon became the centre of a circle, who seemed charmed by her easy unaffected conversation and sprightly manners.

"Mr. Elton, will you lead Miss Stanford to the piano?" said Nora to a gentleman who was standing near Edith.

"Shall I have that pleasure, Miss Stanford?" said he.

"Now, positively no refusal, Miss Edith. You remember that you promised," said Nora, with the most engaging smile, as Edith hesitated.

Mr. Ellis had returned to the parlor, and, as they

passed him on their way to the instrument, he said to Edith in a low voice—

"If you do not feel like singing, play a short piece."

The encouraging glance of his eye did much towards giving her courage, and stimulated her to an unusual effort; and she was conscious of singing better than she had ever done before. When the music had ceased, Mr. Ellis, who was standing near his niece, overheard the following remarks, which rather mystified him at first:—

"She *looks* quite robust; has a splendid color, and not a sickly eye by any means; on the contrary, very brilliant, very brilliant!"

"Yes," answered another gentleman, "but it's hectic, my friend, hectic, and that is an unnatural brilliancy, depend upon it."

"Ah, do you think so! Pity such a lovely flower should—should"—and he blew his nose, unable to finish the sentence.

"Should be kept at home, my dear! *home* is the place for invalids; such exciting scenes are too much for one so delicate. I think she looks exhausted; but I declare if young Elton is not insisting on her singing again! Really, Mr. Ellis ought not to allow it. Here he is, now. Good-evening, Mr. Ellis! I am glad to see you—"

"Uncle Ellis, where is Fred?" interrupted Nora, as the lady, who was mother to a nest of singing-birds, who had been pluming their feathers, and warbling in young Elton's ear in vain, after a look of despair towards the corner where her daughters

were huddled together, turned to Mr. Ellis and was about to express her solicitude for his young friend's health. Nora's manner was slightly confused, as she repeated the question—"Where is Fred?"

"He has retired, Nora,"

"Retired! why, is he sick?"

At that moment Edith commenced another song, and as soon as the attention of the company was concentrated on her, Mr. Ellis drew Mr. Morgan into the hall, and up into the library, then communicated to him the startling intelligence of his son's sudden appearance.

"My God!" exclaimed the father, starting to the door. Mr. Ellis gently forced him into a seat, then related the scene in the library.

"But, Ellis, where is he now?"

"In Fred's hands."

"Then, thank God, he's safe! Fred can cow him in a moment." And he drew a long breath, as he wiped the perspiration from his face. "But, Ellis, what a miracle that Miss Edith escaped unharmed!"

"Yes; it was owing entirely to her presence of mind."

"Come," said Mr. Morgan, after a pause, "let us go up and see how they are getting along"—and they proceeded to the green room. The door was closed, and after listening a moment and hearing no sound, Mr. Morgan opened it softly and entered the room. Fred was seated by the side of the bed on which his brother lay asleep, and motioning to his father to leave the room, he cautiously arose and followed him into the entry.

"Well, my son, you have rather an unpleasant job," said Mr. Morgan.

"He is not troublesome at all," answered Fred. "When I came over here I found him arranging his dress to go down to the parlor; he had thrown Miss Edith's clothes out of the window; and for a moment was furious at finding that his room had been occupied; then he apologized for arriving so late, and continued to dress in the greatest haste."

"But how did you get him to lie down?"

"By telling him that the queen, who he said was waiting for him in the library, would not allow him to go into company until he had refreshed himself after his journey by a nap, and he immediately threw himself on the bed. I was fearful that his anxiety to get asleep would keep him awake, but he fell into a heavy slumber, and as he is exhausted from travel and hunger he will probably not awake until morning."

"It is fortunate that this room is in a remote part of the house," observed Mr. Ellis.

"Yes, the sound of the music and voices cannot reach us, and there's nothing to disturb him. The doctor will undoubtedly arrive before morning, and will think it advisable to return with him in his present weak state; he will have less difficulty with him."

"Do you not wish one of us to remain with you?" asked Mr. Ellis.

"No, I can manage him best alone, if he should awake. You can send one of the boys to lie down

outside of the door here, to be at hand in case of need."

"I will send Christopher," said Mr. Morgan; and, after being reminded by his son that Edith's clothes were still in the yard, he and Mr. Ellis returned to the library, leaving Fred to his lonely vigil. Some one had taken Edith's place at the piano, and when Mr. Ellis entered the parlor she was standing near the door in conversation with a gentleman; the exhilarating effects of the wine had disappeared, leaving her pale and with a wearied expression of countenance. Mr. Ellis looked at her for a moment, then approached and asked if she would not like a seat.

"I would like to leave this warm room for a few moments," she replied, and excusing herself to the gentleman with whom she had been conversing, she took Mr. Ellis's arm and went into the dining-hall. He procured an ice, and while she was partaking of it informed her of his intention to return to the Bluff the following morning.

Anthony will come for you this day two weeks."

"Two weeks?" echoed Edith in surprise.

"Yes; Nora pleaded for a longer visit, and I have consented to another week. Shall you be sorry to return to the quiet of Beech Bluff?"

"O no; I shall be glad to be at home again," she answered, handing him her saucer.

He smiled and said, laying a stress on the word home—

"And I shall be rejoiced to have you all at home

again, for I found it very lonely after you left, surrounded by none but black faces."

"Aunt Martha says that you are keeping Miss Edith out here too long; she has been inquired for already," said Mary to her father, coming into the room, and taking Edith's hand.

A quadrille was forming in the tea-room when Edith entered the parlor, and her hand was immediately solicited for the dance. She declined, and leaving Mr. Ellis's side, took Matty's arm and drew her to a sofa.

"I am so glad to sit down, Miss Edith!" said Matty, who looked excited, and commenced running over on her fingers the number of introductions she had received. "But I've had a splendid time and so many invitations to dance! Aunt Martha says that we must positively learn next winter."

"Cousin Nora wants you, Matty," said Mary, and she threw herself into the seat her sister vacated, echoing her words: "'Oh, I am so glad to sit down!'" But she did not remain long, for she was interested in the dancing, and went to a seat near the door where she could watch the dancers. Mr. Morgan approached and, sitting down by Edith, expressed his regret at seeing her looking so pale. She knew that he had been apprised of his son's arrival, and was not, therefore, surprised when he suddenly remarked in a low voice—

"The evening seems interminable!"—then looking up, "I am sorry, Miss Edith, that your enjoyment has been so much interfered with."

"I have enjoyed the evening very much; the

wine I drank has produced a slight headache, but that's of no consequence," she replied.

"You must not give yourself any uneasiness to-night; Frederick has perfect control over his brother, and will not allow him to leave the green room," he said, after looking around to ascertain that there were no listeners, in their neighborhood.

"I do not feel at all nervous through any fear," she replied, with a smile. "Have you learned how he entered the house without the knowledge of the servants?"

"He climbed up on the arbor and entered at an upper window near the library. We are under great obligations to you, Miss Edith, for being spared a scene of terror here; for had you screamed, or attempted to rush down stairs, he would have become infuriated and followed you, and spread consternation and dismay among our guests."

"Do not give me more credit than I deserve; I supposed at first that he was Frederick, and believing for the moment that it was a practical joke, I was indignant, and, forgetting that I was in his father's house, was about to order him from the room when I discovered my mistake, and became aware that it was his brother. Understanding at once that he had conceived the idea that he was in the presence of Royalty, I humored the fancy, and assuming as much *state* as my terror would allow, I ordered him to leave the apartment."

"The most sensible thing you could have done," said Mr. Morgan, quietly.

"But I think if Mr. Ellis had been one moment

later I should have gone down to the servant's hall," she continued.

"Which would have been quite right. But Mrs. Morgan is approaching; she knows nothing of the matter yet, I shall inform her after the guests have departed; and it's my wish that Nora and her cousins be kept in ignorance of it if possible," he said, hurriedly.

"What is all this confidential conversation about?" asked his wife, "the North or South?" she added, with a laugh. Observing her husband's unusually quiet manner, she continued: "Mr. Morgan, I think we have changed characters this evening; I am enjoying everything with almost girlish delight, and here you, who are usually so full of life, are sitting in this corner as quiet as possible. Mr. Elton has been looking over here with envious eyes, and thinks you are a perfect monopoly. Miss Edith, he has sent me over to ask if you will not sing."

"No, Martha; I positively forbid it; she has given us three songs, and we must not impose upon good-nature." And, rising from his seat, Mr. Morgan beckoned to the young gentlemen his wife had named.

"There, Elton! You say I am a monopoly! You are a Turk to wish Miss Stanford to sing after she has already favored us beyond our expectations."

"I would not insist upon it if disagreeable to Miss Stanford, certainly," said Mr. Elton.

"Well, take my seat, and make yourself, as agreeable as possible; but no exciting topics, remember," said Mr. Morgan, shaking his finger; "Miss Stan-

ford is suffering from headache." And he walked away with his wife, who bestowed a very patronizing smile on the couple as she left them.

It grew late, and to Edith's unspeakable relief, Mr. Elton finally took his leave and the guests gradually departed until the rooms were entirely deserted by all save the family. Nora dropped on the sofa, exclaiming: "Oh, I am glad it's over! But it went off splendidly—a perfect success!"

Mrs. Morgan was called into the dining-hall, and, knowing the nature of the communication she was to receive, Edith awaited with considerable anxiety her reappearance. She was surprised to see her return after a short absence from the parlor, very composed in her manner, though a trifle paler, which might have been attributed to fatigue. She approached the sofa, and said—

"Miss Edith, my dear, you had better occupy the room next to your pupils as you are not feeling very well; I have ordered your clothes to be carried over there. And, girls, you must lock your doors to-night, for you know all the silver was brought from the bank to-day, and though it is not probable, yet it is *possible* that thieves might be about."

"I am not going to my room until Tink looks under the bed!" exclaimed Nora.

"Nor I!" "Nor I!" echoed her cousins; and accordingly Tink was dispatched up stairs to search for lurking thieves. Edith could not help smiling, and Mrs. Morgan, satisfied that her daughter and nieces did not suspect the presence of the madman in the house, advised them to retire immediately,

and bade Edith good-night in a much more familiar tone and manner than she had hitherto assumed.

Mr. Ellis and Mrs. Morgan were left alone in the parlor, and, after discussing the events of the evening, Mrs. Morgan heaved a deep sigh, and said—

“Fred’s infatuation troubles me quite as much as Clarence’s insanity.”

Her brother-in-law stopped short in his walk, and looked at her in surprise.

“How long is Miss Edith going to remain at the Bluff?” she asked, without appearing to notice his astonishment.

“Two years,” he replied, resuming his promenade before the piano, the question having given him a clue to her meaning.

“Two years; let me see!” she said, thoughtfully; and after a moment’s pause continued: “Yes, Fred will be in Europe two years, and she will have gone home when he returns, but I am extremely sorry that he has postponed his trip.”

“Why has he done so?” asked Mr. Ellis, with an effort to appear unconcerned.

“He has assigned no reason, but I suspect that Miss Edith is the magnet that is keeping him.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Ellis, quietly.

“Yes, undoubtedly, and she does not seem wholly indifferent to him; I noticed that she wore his flowers to-night, which was certainly a very direct way of showing that she valued them.”

Mr. Ellis was quite wide awake, though he made no reply.

After a few moments’ silence, Mrs. Morgan spoke

again, and with more animation; "You know, Jacob, that I never could tolerate *governesses*, and was always so averse to having one in the house that we never employed one for Leonora, so you may judge how revolting it would be to me to have my son marry one."

Mr. Ellis's face flushed, and the vein in his forehead grew larger; but he turned in his walk, and made no reply.

Mrs. Morgan seemed irritated by his silence, and asked, in a quick tone, "What do you think about the matter, Jacob?"

"I think that the family would not be *disgraced* by an alliance with Miss Edith," he answered, in the most deliberate manner.

"Certainly not, for it would raise her to our level; not bring us down at all, which would apply to any person beneath us; but nevertheless I do not wish my son to *stoop* when he marries."

"Martha, did you observe anything either in Miss Edith's manner or appearance that would indicate that she occupied a position inferior to that of *any* person present this evening?"

"But *we* know that she does."

"That's not the question. Can you point out a single objectionable feature that would cause her husband or his family to blush for her?"

"No, not in society."

"*Anywhere*, then? Have you once seen her throw out attractions to gentleman, or seem at all anxious to win their attention or admiration, to lead

you to suppose that she is, as the phrase goes, looking out for a husband?"

"Apparently not; but Miss Edith is one of that quiet, unassuming sort of people, who feel their way gradually, and she makes many a point in her modest, *unconscious* way, that a more turbulent but less experienced player loses. "Still waters run deep."

"I am convinced that you are mistaken in your opinion of her character; she is anything but *artful*."

"Time will show! But, as a particular favor, I wish you to discourage Fred's visit to the Bluff; he has signified his intention of spending Easter week with you."

"If he proposes it, how can I, with any degree of politeness, discourage it, particularly as he is going away so soon?"

"Then you can prevent his being thrown much into Miss Edith's society while there."

"Not easily, if he feels inclined to seek it; but I can suggest a way by which she can be led to repulse Fred's advances."

"How is that, Jacob?"

"By making her acquainted with the family infirmity."

Mrs. Morgan's haughty face for a moment flushed, then a pained expression passed over it, making her brother-in-law almost regret having cauterized the tender spot which Clarence's arrival had already inflamed. But the flush and distressed look passed off, and with her usual composure she replied—

"It would not have the least effect. A young girl in love is not apt to take into consideration an hereditary evil by which her lover may *possibly* be attacked in the future."

"But she is not in love yet, and the knowledge may *possibly* guard her against such a calamity."

"I am not so sure of that; she seemed very much depressed this evening."

"Which arose from the shock her nerves had previously received," returned Mr. Ellis, surprised that it could be attributed to any other cause, even by a person so inventive as Mrs. Morgan.

"I think not; the depression was produced by anxiety for Fred's safety, and would have disappeared had he returned to the parlor. Allow me to be the best judge of her sentiments towards him; I have watched her closely for the past few days."

Mr. Ellis threw back his hair by a nervous movement, and, after looking at his watch, said—

"Well, I think I will retire, as I have a long ride before me in the morning, and it is not far from daylight now."

The words were scarcely spoken before the door-bell rang furiously, and Dr.— was admitted. Mr. Morgan came down from the library, and questions and explanations ensued on both sides.

Clarence had been missed the evening previous, and the night had been spent in searching for him in the neighborhood of the asylum, and after spending the morning in looking through Savannah, in the suburbs of which the asylum was situated, the doctor concluded that his patient had traveled

homeward, and he followed immediately. The distance, one hundred and twenty-three miles, ought to have been passed over in a few hours, but delays occurred on the road, and when the doctor arrived he was in quite a state of excitement for a man usually so calm, and expecting to be ushered into a scene of confusion, looked in astonishment at Mrs. Morgan sitting so quietly at the centre-table in her evening dress.

Clarence was still asleep when the doctor and Mr. Morgan entered the green room, and Fred was keeping his lonely vigil by the bed-side.

"Go to bed, my boy; I'll take your place now," said the doctor, and Fred gladly obeyed. Meeting his uncle on the stairs his first question was—

"How is Miss Edith? Has she retired?"

"Yes, some time ago, and with a severe headache," replied Mr. Ellis, with a slight twitching of his nostrils; and entering the library he closed the door. The light was still burning, and on the table were a few faded flowers and Edith's letters.

For some time Mr. Ellis stood looking at them, his features working convulsively, and his hands clasped and resting on the table.

"Oh, Edith! Edith! dear, precious sunbeam! brightening my home for a brief season, and then—no, no! I cannot give her up! I cannot lose her forever!

CHAPTER XIII.

A FALSE POSITION.

Soon after daylight, the doctor and his patient were on their way back to Savannah, accompanied by Mr. Morgan. When the family assembled at a late breakfast, and Nora inquired for her father, Mrs. Morgan explained his absence by saying that he had been called away by business. Fred was the last to enter the breakfast-room.

"I hope your headache is entirely dissipated, Miss Edith," said he, taking his father's seat by her side.

"I feel perfectly well, thank you," she replied.

"And how is *your* head, Cousin Fred?" asked Matty.

"Never felt better in my life," he replied, though his pale face and unusually serious countenance belied the assertion.

"Parties don't agree with you and Miss Edith. We'll shut you two up in the library, next time, and you can enjoy a quiet evening together," said Matty, laughing.

At the mention of the library, Edith became slightly nervous, and observing Mrs. Morgan's eye fixed upon her, she colored, and dropped her own.

"I hope the 'next time' will come soon; that is, if Miss Edith does not object to the *tete-a tete*," said Fred, with the most perfect *sang froid*, handing Edith a glass of water.

"This is all very pleasant, but indeed I must

leave you," said Mr. Ellis, looking at his watch, and rising suddenly. "You'll excuse me, Martha?"

"Certainly; but, Jacob, you've not eaten anything. Won't you have time to finish your breakfast?" asked Mrs. Morgan.

"I must be at the bank by eleven, and it's nearly that now. I'll return to bid you good-by," he said to his daughters, and left the room.

Although Mrs. Morgan had been in the breakfast-room alone with Edith previous to the entrance of the others, yet she did not allude to the unpleasant occurrence of the previous evening; but asked kindly after her health, how she rested, etc.; and then, much in her usual manner, talked about the party, criticised the dresses, and eulogized Mr. Elton. Edith did not know that Clarence had been taken away, but supposed that he was still in the green room, attended by his father. At the earliest opportunity after breakfast, when Edith had gone into the parlor, and was gathering up her gloves and fan, which, together with the flowers she had worn in her bosom, were lying on the sofa, Fred followed her, and communicated in a low voice the not unpleasant intelligence that his brother had returned to the asylum. She felt much relieved, though she did not express her feelings in words, and, remembering her letters she had left in the library, after a few commonplace remarks to Nora, who entered while her brother was speaking, Edith left the room and went up stairs. Fred followed her to the library, and, laughing as she opened the door, she pointed to her letters, and said—

"See! I do not deserve all the credit you have given me for being so calm; the manner in which my things are thrown about indicates considerable excitement."

"Uncle Ellis is a luxurious being! his head was pillowed on these flowers last night," said Fred, taking a small bunch from the sofa pillow. "I wonder if there were any thorns in them!" he said, smiling, and examining them closely. "I must have three of those in your hand; I have only four here."

"What can you possibly want with these worthless things?" asked Edith, in surprise.

"Their *perfume* has not departed," he answered, taking those she had brought from the parlor. "I have a strange fancy for faded flowers; in fact, I have a passion for flowers in any state, faded or fresh, and I regret that one branch of my education was so sadly neglected—botany. But," he continued, arranging the flowers and pulling a ribbon from a book to tie them with, "in my ignorance of botanical terms, I substitute grammatical points, and then I have a language of flowers that I understand. For instance, this flower (it was lovely in the bouquet; I was struck with its beauty there), this rose I call 'exclamation point;' it denotes wonder, astonishment, admiration, etc. To your eye it is nothing but a withered flower, but to me it represents a day of the past week, it is typical of Christmas Eve. By the way, do you remember what Prior says?—

'Thy emblem, gracious queen, the British rose,
Type of sweet rule and gentle majesty.'

In all ages flowers have been used as emblems, representing one thing to the eye and another to the understanding. But, to proceed: this—do you see those leaves? they form two distinct curves—I do not know the name of it, but I call it ‘parenthesis,’ and it indicates a new feature inserted in the programme for Christmas day—*prayers*, to be uttered in a lower tone of voice. And these are all sentential marks—comma, semicolon, colon, period, all of which in grammar, represent pauses, but to me moments lost. By the by, where were you yesterday afternoon, that you only appeared at tea-time?”

“Altering the girls’ dresses,” answered Edith, laughing.

“And unconsciously cultivating a flower for my bouquet, a period—full stop—terminating the sentence or week.”

Edith picked up her letters, and made a movement as if to go.

“Wait one moment. Here are two more—the dash and note of interrogation—last evening and to-day; the first denotes a train of thought suddenly broken off, and the subject changed, and an unexpected turn in the *sentiment* of the evening; the last denotes a question—to be asked.” He tied the stems together, and, holding them up, said, with a light laugh, “A choice bouquet of grammatical and rhetorical points!”

Fred’s manner was not at all flippant, but so earnest and serious that, when Edith began to understand his ambiguous language, she felt something like alarm, and, echoing his laugh to hide her em-

barrassment, she stammered something about walking out with the girls, and turned to leave the room.

"Here they are, Jacob!" said Mrs. Morgan, throwing open the door almost in Edith's face, and causing her to start suddenly and color violently as she observed Mrs. Morgan direct a look of intelligence at her son, then a glance full of meaning at her brother-in-law.

"Miss Edith, Mr. Ellis is about to leave," Mrs. Morgan said, with a return of her old, haughty manner, which for a few days she had been gradually throwing off.

"It seems nonsense to bid good-by at every brief separation! I am sorry to have disturbed you," said Mr. Ellis, looking full into Edith's face; extending his hand, he took hers for a moment, then relinquished it without the usual gentle pressure; his brown eyes had not their wonted soft, warm light, but looked coldly upon her, and with a shade of suspicion in their clear depths.

"Good-by, Uncle Ellis," said Fred. "I'll see you again at Easter."

"I thought you were going to Europe next month."

"Not until May, and if agreeable to you I'll spend Easter week at the Bluff."

"I shall be very happy to see you there, but I think you are making a mistake in postponing your trip," Mr. Ellis said, buttoning up his coat.

Fred gave his uncle a penetrating glance, then dropped his eyes, and with a confident smile, replied

—"Oh, there's no danger; I do not apprehend any icebergs."

Edith did not follow the others down stairs, but for a moment leaned against the banister, then went over to her own room. Mrs. Morgan's offended haughty manner, and Mr. Ellis's cold, searching look had discovered to her that her position with Frederick was misunderstood. She saw at once, as if suddenly endowed with the gift of *clairvoyance*, that by his mother she was suspected of using artifice to keep him so constantly by her side, and of having matrimonial designs upon him; and by his uncle, of possessing a spirit of coquetry, and of treating his nephew with an appearance of regard, but with a view to deceive and disappoint. Since Christmas morning, Edith had enjoyed Frederick Morgan's society as she would have done that of any agreeable person, and without a thought of inspiring a warmer sentiment than a mere present friendship; even the remembrance of which she had no idea would last beyond her brief visit. But, in the retrospect of the past few days, she remembered many incidents which at the time had made no impression on her mind, but which, now that she could look back upon them, she wondered had not made her more reserved and guarded. With considerable vexation at herself and Fred, and a slight degree of regret at the sudden termination of their pleasant intercourse, she resolved to keep aloof entirely, and, if possible, to avoid being left alone with him for a single moment. She trusted to the future to correct Mr. Ellis's opinion, and hoped that her re-

serve and indifference would cause Fred to abandon the idea of the Easter visit, which she now fully understood was to be made to her.

It was the last day of their visit; the following morning Edith and her pupils were to return to the Bluff. They were seated at the tea-table discussing the Christmas just past, and speculating on the probability of passing the next together, when Christopher entered with the evening meal. Fred, who attributed Edith's coldness and distant manner to coyness, and his mother's influence, had ceased to seek her society, and seldom addressed her save in general conversation, believing that at the Bluff, when not under the surveillance of his awe-inspiring mother, an explanation would be brought about, and she would look with favor upon his suit. Taking the letters and papers from Christopher, he glanced over them, and retaining a couple, handed the rest to his father.

"One for you, Miss Edith," said Mr. Morgan, laying a letter down by her plate.

"You must pay for delivery!" exclaimed Nora, and with a playful but, Edith afterwards remembered, a precipitate and confused manner, she snatched the letter and put it in her pocket.

"Now for my letter! What do you demand for delivery?" said Edith, after the meal was over, going up to Nora.

"More than you are able to pay," she answered, laughing, and holding her hand over her pocket ran out of the room.

Edith followed her, though not in any haste, and

when she entered Nora's room, she was amazed to behold her standing quietly under the light with the letter open in her hand and reading it with the greatest unconcern.

"What, *my* letter?" Edith exclaimed, in indignation and astonishment.

"Just be composed, Miss Edith. This letter is to me, under cover to you; I will ask you to excuse the liberty I have taken with your name after I have finished the reading of it"—and she read on to the end.

"I must request an explanation," said Edith, decidedly.

"Very well, you can have it if you wish. This letter is, as you probably by this time mistrust, from Cavelli," replied Nora, with an unblushing face.

"And why was it directed to me?" asked Edith, with dignity.

"Simply because mother has very absurd ideas upon the subject of letters passing between young ladies and gentlemen, and I requested him to write under cover to you. I received one day before yesterday, but secured it before Christopher carried the bag in."

"Miss Morgan, you cannot suppose that I am willing to abet you in this deception."

"Certainly I suppose you will not say anything about it, for it is *my* secret, not yours, and you have no *right* to reveal it."

"Miss Nora, I entreat you to acknowledge it to your parents yourself, and gain their consent to an

open, honorable correspondence. What confidence can you place in a person who encourages you to deceive them? It would be an ill return for your father's kindness and hospitality if I were to sanction such proceedings. A clandestine correspondence cannot be prolific of good, and to prevent evil consequences I must inform your father this evening."

"Do so; it will not matter much, as Cavelli returns to-morrow, and will make a formal proposal. But I do not wish to prevent you from distinguishing yourself in *my brothers* eyes, and having something to make a merit of to Uncle Ellis; therefore, the sooner you relieve your mind to father, the earlier you will have Frederick on his knees; he will be infinitely obliged to you if you succeed in putting me out of favor with my parents." And, with her most scornful look, she passed Edith and descended to the parlor.

The truth flashed across Edith's mind as she stood, petrified with astonishment, where Nora had left. That affable, familiar manner had been assumed for a selfish purpose, and her object gained, Nora had returned to her arrogant ways with insulting words and scornful, contemptuous looks. Was it possible that the stately, polished, refined Leonora Morgan could so far forget herself as to treat with insult a visitor in her father's house? To take a liberty with that visitor's name, and then throw defiance in her face! Edith walked the floor in a state of excitement. She could brook neglect,

disdain, cold treatment, but her Christian temper was not proof against insult.

"Sweet Heaven! keep me in temper; she must be mad! mad like her brother, only with more method in her madness," she said, aloud, as she passed into her own room. After much deliberation, she concluded to go below, and when her pupils had left the parlor, to inform Mrs. Morgan, as quietly, calmly as possible, that the letter which had occasioned their abrupt departure from the tea-room was not addressed to her, but to Leonora from Cavelli. She had become quite composed in mind, and was packing some things in her trunk when the door was thrown violently open, and Matty rushed in, exclaiming—

"Come down, Miss Edith; Cousin Nora has fainted, and they can't bring her to!"

"Fainted!" echoed Edith, in surprise, dropping the dress she was folding.

"Yes. Uncle Morgan had a letter from some one in Philadelphia, and when he read it out Cousin Nora dropped down like one dead. The letter was all about Cavelli, who has been forging Uncle Morgan's and papa's names and drawn ever so much money."

Edith descended immediately, followed by Matty, who trembled like one in an ague fit. When they entered the room, Nora was stretched on the sofa, and bending over her were her father, mother, and brother. Fred was bathing her temples, Mr. Morgan was chafing her hands, while his wife with

trembling fingers was trying to loosen her daughter's dress.

"Miss Edith, can you?" And Edith unhooked the dress, raised the poor girl, who was beginning to revive, and held a glass of water to her lips. In a few moments she was able to sit up, and looking around her eyes rested on her father's face; it gradually expanded, then flashed with a sudden fire, and making an effort to rise she shrieked, "It's false! a base lie!" then sank back upon the sofa, and was in another swoon. It was a scene of confusion: the servants hurrying to and fro procuring restoratives; Mrs. Morgan, white as the face on her lap, reproaching her husband for his want of consideration in reading the letter aloud; and Mr. Morgan hurling invectives at the scoundrel," intermingled with words of endearment addressed to his daughter. Mary and Matty, pale and trembling, were standing aloof from the sofa, while Frederick and Edith, the only calm ones present, were administering the remedies, all of which failed to revive her the second time. Mr. Morgan dispatched Christopher after Dr. Elton, the family physician, but Fred, becoming impatient at the servant's delay, snatched his hat and dashed out of the house.

Edith's resentment had vanished, and she looked with compassion on the face which but a short time before had lighted up with scorn, and the lips, so white and compressed, which had last addressed her with insolence and contempt. The old doctor whose ear had caught Nora's first wailing cry when she entered the world, and with doubled-up fists seemed

ready to battle with its troubles, **bustled into the room, and approaching the sofa ordered every one to leave it but Mrs. Morgan.** He proceeded to apply active remedies, scolding Mr. Morgan the while for having read the news before his daughter, whom he pronounced a simpleton for ever having looked upon such a puppy as Cavelli. **A family physician generally becomes the repository of the family secrets and is therefore privileged to express his opinion on other matters than those pertaining to his profession.** Dr. Elton was no exception; in Mr. Morgan's family he was regarded as an oracle, and Mrs. Morgan, looked up to him almost with veneration. He was the only person to whose opinion Nora would ever yield, or whose advice she ever asked, and when she opened her eyes and saw his kind face bending over her, she gave him a look of recognition, then burst into tears.

"There, be quiet, my daughter; don't distress yourself," he said, soothingly. "I am going to take you up stairs, and then you can tell me all your troubles! Miss Stanford, will you—"

"Not *her!* I *hate* her! She shall not touch me!" exclaimed Nora, passionately.

"Tush! tush! not so loud!" said the doctor, in a peremptory tone.

Edith retired to the farther part of the room, where Nora could not see her, thinking that her presence recalled the letter, and after she had been taken up stairs by her father and the doctor, bade Fred good-night and, with the girls, retired to her chamber.

"It was long before Edith laid her head upon her pillow, and still longer before she closed her eyes in sleep. She reviewed her visit which had been so full of events; she reviewed Nora's conduct, which surprised, alarmed her; for though there be many such elsewhere, she had never before met with her parallel. While looking at Nora, Edith had determined to say nothing about the letters, but, on reflection, she concluded that it would be best to mention the subject to Mr. Morgan, as Nora's letters might possibly have some connection with the one he had received; and more particularly as she remembered that the envelopes bore her name, and if found they would implicate herself in the secret correspondence.

She was turning this over in her mind the next morning, and trying to arrive at a decision how to broach the subject in the most delicate manner, when Mr. Morgan entered the breakfast room, where she was seated alone, and handing her a letter said—

"You dropped this last evening, Miss Edith."

She did not raise her hand to receive it, but answered—"It does not belong to me Mr Morgan."

He looked at her in surprise, then examined the envelope.

"If I understand the superscription, it certainly does belong to Miss Edith Stanford," he returned, with a faint smile.

"The envelope is directed to me, but the letter is addressed to your daughter," she replied, looking

up into his face with her large, honest eyes, while a blush of shame, shame for Leonora dyed her cheek.

"My daughter?"

"From Cavelli."

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed, while every nerve in his face worked; astonishment and grief at his daughter's duplicity being for the moment the paramount emotions of his mind; then rage at Cavelli seemed to take possession of him, and he strode up and down the apartment heaping imprecations on the head of the "foreign scoundrel."

"Miss Stanford," he said, stopping suddenly.

"I cannot believe that you have been an abettor—no, not an *abettor*, for all concerned in such a proceeding are principals; but have you sanctioned the use of your name for such an unworthy purpose?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Morgan; it only came to my knowledge last evening when I followed your daughter out of the room for the purpose of getting from her my letter, as I supposed it to be."

"And would you have returned to the Bluff without apprising her parents of the atrocious deception being practised upon them in the carrying on of a clandestine correspondence?"

"I was about to inform you of the fact, when I was told that you had received a letter, the reading of which had affected your daughter so painfully."

"So painfully!" he repeated, then, sitting down, said—

"Miss Edith, you have become, during your short visit, acquainted with much that is unpleasant, con-

ned with my family—my son's insanity, and my daughter's infatuation, which may, God knows! and in insanity also." For some moments he sat with his head on his hand, then, as if thinking aloud, continued—"Poor Clarence! he was the first to inherit the curse which rests over his mother's family, and I could, but I will not execrate her, who hastened its course on him. He was a noble fellow, but in an evil moment he met one who fascinated him, who inspired a love as deep and true as was ever cherished for woman. They met in Europe, were betrothed and the day fixed for their marriage; she returned to America, and he made arrangements to follow in a month. The day he arrived in Liverpool, he was taken ill, and when the vessel sailed that was to have borne him home he was prostrated by fever. Months elapsed, and scarcely able to travel, he embarked for New York, and reached there the night his betrothed was married to another. A few weeks after, he returned to us impaired in health, dejected and depressed, and after a few days of seclusion, proceeded to furnish the green room, frequently muttering to himself—'Forsaken, forsaken.' When it was completed, he procured a suit of clothes entirely green, which he called the livery of the forsaken, and when he appeared in them the dreadful truth was forced upon our minds that he was bereft of reason. For days he would seclude himself, and then suddenly appear at the table. Sometimes he would be very communicative, talking a great deal about his Helen, at others he would remain perfectly silent. At length he com-

menced to rave wildly, finally became malicious, and after twice attempting my life, I consented, reluctantly, to send him to Savannah. Poor boy! the light of reason will never drawn upon his mind again."

Matty entered and thoughtlessly greeted her uncle with her saucy good-morning and quick kiss; he did not make the usual hearty response, but turned his head away and fumbled in his pocket, where he had put Nora's letter.

"Your father will be up to-day, Mary," he said, at length.

"Papa coming! what for, uncle?"

"On business, my dear; I sent for him last evening," replied Mr. Morgan. And taking the letter that he had received the evening before he carefully read it over.

"Martha," he said, addressing his wife, who entered with a face which bore evidence of a sleepless night—"Martha, was Cavelli present the evening I mentioned having sent a large sum of money to my agent in Philadelphia to invest?"

"I do not remember," she replied, briefly.

"He was, uncle; it was the evening before the party."

"So it was; the evening before he left, and he without doubt conceived the idea of forging the draft that same night. The villian! But he must have an accomplice in New York, for those letters" (turning to Edith) "were written in Philadelphia and sent to New York to be mailed.

"I prefer to hear nothing further on the subject,

Mr. Morgan," said his wife, with a look and tone indicating that it was an unpleasant one to her.

The breakfast was eaten in silence. Fred came in as the others arose from the table, and when his mother left the room her husband renewed the subject so disagreeable to her and discussed it with his son.

It was near noon when Mr. Ellis arrived, and after an interview with Mr. Morgan in the library, he entered the parlor and informed Edith and his daughters that he should start that evening for Philadelphia.

"What are you going for, papa?" asked Matty.

"On business, my child."

"About the forgery, papa?" asked Mary, in a low voice.

"Yes, my dear," he replied, smiling at her curiosity.

Immediately after dinner the carriage was at the door, and bidding good-bye to all save Nora, whom they were not allowed to see, Edith and her pupils were whirling over the road to the Bluff.

CHAPTER XIV.

DISAPPOINTED HOPES.

**" Oh, 'tis the curse in love, and still approv'd,
When women cannot love where they're beloved."**

WEEKS passed away quietly; the round of school duties only interrupted for a day by Mr. Ellis's return from his journey, which proved unsatisfactory, for Cavelli had managed to effect his escape to his own country.

Easter came, and with it Fred, who brought the intelligence that Nora was quite melancholy, seeing few visitors, and seldom going out. Her friends were becoming alarmed, and were planning schemes to draw her from home, in the hope that new scenes and fresh faces would restore the tone of her mind, and lead her to forget him who, for selfish and wicked purposes, had so trifled with her affections. In a moment of confidence, Nora had revealed to her mother that Cavelli had proposed a private marriage, urging it on the plea that her parents would never give their consent, and, in the event of his being called to Italy by his father, she might, during his absence, be persuaded to marry another. But if they were married secretly, he believed that after a brief period of alienation she would be forgiven by her parents, and he would be recalled.

Fred seemed very quiet, save at times, when Matty's exuberant spirits would rouse him, and together they would fly through the house, making

it ring with their merry laughter. Edith observed the same rule of conduct that had governed her actions during the last two weeks of her visit at his father's house. Without making her motive apparent, so as to attract the observation of her pupils, she contrived to be in his society only when they or Mr. Ellis were present. But several times, and always at the piano, she fancied that his voice assumed a tender tone, and though his words were what any one might have uttered, yet the look that often accompanied them revealed more than words could have expressed.

"She knew she was by him beloved; she knew,
For quickly comes such knowledge, that his heart
Was darkened by her shadow."

And when, wishing to give him no cause to think his sentiments reciprocated she rose from the instrument with a quiet, cold manner, as she moved away she saw his hand tremble and a shadow gather on his brow.

Easter week expired, and Edith and her pupils returned to the school-room, but Fred did not return to Augusta. He liked the Bluff, and thought it had improved wonderfully; he was charmed with its rural beauty, and, considering that he could not visit it again for two years, he concluded to protract his stay another week.

Mr. Ellis had treated Edith with unvarying kindness, but with studied reserve since the morning he had seen her in the library with his nephew. She now seldom saw the bright look on his face, and more than once, when, at the request of his daughters, he accompanied her playing with his flute, at Fred's

approach he had taken it from his lips, and, with a complaint that the instruments did not chord, or that his flute was out of order, he had left the room. At such times, Matty, half in earnest, half in jest, would scold her cousin for interrupting the delightful music, and, as a penalty for his impudence, would compel him to talk to her instead of Miss Edith.

A few days after the Easter vacation, Edith had dismissed her pupils, and was alone in the school-room, busily engaged in writing letters. She was rapidly penning her thoughts when her attention became diverted by the sound of footsteps and voices in the library. The door between the two rooms was ajar, and that leading into the parlor closed and locked on the inside. The first words of the conversation between Fred and his uncle told Edith that it was a private one, and that she of all the household should not be a listener. But what should she do? Should she notify them of her proximity by a cough? or open the door, and, waiving all delicacy, pass through the library? While she was deliberating the conversation continued, and revealed to her Fred's mission to the Bluff, which, to do justice to her woman's instinct, she had more than half suspected before. His burning words fell on her ear, as, in low tones, he revealed to his uncle his love for her, and then, in a passionate burst, begged *him* to intercede, should his own pleadings fail. Mr. Ellis replied, but in tones so low the words did not reach her.

"I know, uncle, I know the *curse* that rests over

our house; but am I to be debarred from all that makes life happy? Must *I* give up the blessed hope of ever clasping a wife to my bosom? *Must* I smother this ardent love, and coldly bid *her* farewell forever? O God! that we should be so cursed, so *cursed*! But, uncle, if she *does* love me, and after I have made known all to her, she is willing to take me for better, for *worse*, am I not justified in marrying? or, out of regard for the generation yet unborn, perhaps *never to be born*, must I dash the cup of happiness aside when it is just within my grasp? No, uncle, I cannot see the righteousness of that; that would be madness indeed.

"But, Fred, you acknowledge that you have received no *proof* that she loves you. I fear you are too sanguine, my boy," said Mr. Ellis, clearing his throat.

"I have received no evidence save her blushes and apparent timidity when I approach, but—"

"Do not misinterpret those; they may arise from a knowledge of your sentiments and a wish not to encourage them."

"So said my mother, and she said more. Uncle Ellis, do not consider me impertinent; the question is not prompted by idle curiosity, but from a wish to know the *truth*! Was my mother right when she bade me stifle my love, and told me that you wished to retain Miss Edith in your family, not as your daughters' governess, but as—as—*your wife*? Uncle, do *you* love her, too?"

Now she listened! now she raised the heavy bands of hair that covered her ear and bent forwards to

catch the reply. But she knew it already; she knew, notwithstanding his distant manner, that he *did* love her, and with the smile of confidence that parted her lips there mingled the shadow of a regret at the pang Fred must feel when he heard the confirmation of his mother's words. She heard Mr. Ellis's step in a distant part of the room, heard it return, and then the words—

"Frederick, while Miss Edith remains in my house I look upon her as *my ward*, and, as a conscientious guardian, having her happiness in view, I have questioned your motive in coming to the Bluff; believing that her happiness would *not* be promoted by becoming a member of your father's family, both on account of that blight, insanity, which might possibly visit *you*, and make her more than a widow, and on account of the pride of your mother and sister, which would forbid their receiving your wife with cordiality if she had previously occupied a position one grade below theirs, I have striven to discourage you and prevent, if possible, your making proposals. But, Frederick, if she, with a full knowledge of all the trials she may be called to endure, willingly consents to become your wife, to share your joys and sorrows, then I say God speed."

She heard no more. enough had reached her ear, and, as a draught of air closed the door, she arose, and, with a face white as the driven snow, clasped her cold hands, and, with a look of agony, stood for a moment like one upon whom had fallen a sudden blight; then her white lips parted, and the words

"his *ward*!" were uttered in a tone so low, so full of misery that to her they seemed to contain the very essence of unhappiness. She leaned her bowed head upon the desk, and remained so motionless that she seemed a perfect statue. The shades of evening had gathered and darkened the room when she lifted her head and murmured, "Keep yourself from idols." Her face was still colorless, and the look of suffering still there, but she repeated, "*Keep yourselves from idols*;" and, taking a shawl, threw it over her shoulders, listened a moment at the door, then opened it, and, passing through the library, stepped out upon the piazza. Long she paced up and down, heedless that her hair and clothes were becoming damp with the heavy southern dew, and forgetful that the sound of the tea-bell had fallen on her ear when she closed the school-room door; she walked, slowly back and forth, with the moonlight playing on her drooping figure, and when the bell again sounded, she started as if awakened from a deep sleep. Hesitating a second, she went up to her room for a few moments while the family were assembling, and then descended to the tea-room, her face wearing its usual look of sweet serenity. In answer to the girls' questions, she stated that she had been writing letters and walking on the piazza.

"We thought that you were lying down, because you had the headache this afternoon, and papa told Aunt Cilla not to disturb you," said Mary.

She observed the look of scrutiny with which Mr. Ellis regarded her as she entered the room, but the usual blush did not rise to her face; she no-

ticed, too, Fred's tender, anxious expression, and his nervous, trembling manner as he placed a chair for her, and, contrary to his usual custom, sat down by her side; but it did not produce a feeling beyond that of strong indifference until Matty, in passing to her own seat, stooped and kissed her cheek, saying, "I am so sorry your head aches, Miss Edith." Then she felt a sudden reaction; the blood like a torrent rushed to her face, and her breast heaved with suppressed emotion. But it was of momentary duration, and when Mr. Ellis's clear voice uttered the grace, she made the sign of the cross with her accustomed devotion.

After tea, remembering her unfinished letters, she bade the girls good-night at the foot of the stairs, saying that she was going to the school room for a few moments. She did not take a light, but left the door open, and by the light of the lamp burning on the library table she gathered up her writing materials and was closing the desk when she heard a footstep, and immediately after a shadow fell across the lid. Looking around, she discovered Frederick Morgan standing in the door, and, bidding him a quiet good-night, passed him on the threshold, and was rapidly, leaving the room when he started forward, and, in a quick, earnest tone, begged her to stop one moment.

"Miss Edith, it is not late, and can you not spare me one moment?"

She turned, and, without saying a word, laid her portfolio on the table, and, with her full, dark eye

bent upon him with a cold, passive look, stood ready to listen.

"Oh, Edith! *do not* look upon me in that forbidding manner. You *must* know why I have sought this interview," he exclaimed, advancing with his hands clasped, and then recoiling as he met her frigid look.

"I do know, Mr. Morgan, for I was an unwilling listener to the conversation between yourself and Mr. Ellis in this room this afternoon," she replied, in a low, steady voice.

"Miss Edith!"

"I was in the school-room; and since I am aware of your—your *intentions*, I will spare you the—"

"Oh, *Edith!* you do not, you *cannot* mean that—"

"That though I entertain for you a warm friendship, I do not love you," she interrupted.

"My God! And must I share Clarence's fate?" he exclaimed, vehemently, his tall, slight figure bending like a willow, and his hands pressed over his blanched face. Then he dropped them, and, approaching her with suddenness, exclaimed, in a low, eager tone—

"Dear Edith, is it that you fear that I may become *insane*?"

"No, Mr.—Frederick—"

"Thank you, Edith," he interrupted. And she continued—

"It is because I do—"

"Do not repeat those words!" he said, hastily and with strong feeling. "I must love you still. But oh, Edith, if you *could* but love me, if you

would be *mine*, I would make your life so happy! and with this love that passeth understanding I would love you even to this life's end!"

"No, Frederick, it cannot be."

"O God! And this heart was so full hope, and now—" A "tablet of unutterable thoughts" passed over his face, and, snatching her hand, he pressed it again and again to his icy lips, and, without another word, dropped into a chair, his frame quivering and his head bowed on his knee, as if utterly crushed. Edith had experienced the same anguish but a few hours before, and she knew how like a withering blight comes the knowledge that the one for whom a wealth of love has been garnered up is indifferent; that the idol, whose every look, word, and tone has been cherished, and, in the absence of the loved one, thought and dreamed on, is cold, unloving. She had experienced that agony of mind on learning that the love so confident and hopeful, is naught to its object; and though she had prayed long and fervently, yet she still felt as if suddenly bereft of every earthly happiness. She experienced a strong sense of guilt in having made unto herself another god; and, repenting her own sinfulness, and pitying Fred's distress, she bent her head, and breathed into his ear what she had been so continually repeating to herself—"Keep yourselves from idols; Frederick, He has said, *Keep yourselves from idols.*"

With quick steps, heedless of the wailing cry "*Edith!*" she passed from the library to her own room; and, throwing on a wrapper, seated herself

to add a few more words to her mother's letter :—

“ * * * I think, dear mother, at the close of the present year I will *resign* and return to you. Not that I do not continue pleased with my situation, for I have yet the first fault to find ; I am fondly attached to my dear pupils, and will part with them with feelings of the deepest regret ; but I do not think I should be happy if I were to remain another year ; as my mind is quite made up, you may expect me home when the foliage around the little farm has put on its gay fall dress, and Brother George can obtain leave of absence from his harvesters to come for me. * * * ”

“ Why, Miss Eden, honey, it am nine o'clock, and bress yer heart if yer didn't sleep in yer dressin'-gown ! Am yer sick, honey ? ” exclaimed Aunt Cilla, the next morning, arousing Edith from a sound sleep. Alarmed at the lateness of the hour, she sprang from her couch, and with the greatest precipitancy commenced to dress, while the old negro woman continued—“ Lor' a massy ! how pale de chile am ! What am de matter ? *Notting ?* Don't b'lieve dat, no how, fur yer habn't bin de same chile since de visit to 'Gusta, and I jis b'lieve dat, Miss Morgan and Miss Nora didn't treat yer proper. Know'd how'd be, an' tole young massa so ; but yer couldn't stay to hum an' de young missuses go way for tree weeks, no how.” And, muttering something about Miss Eden's breakfast, she hurried down stairs.

Edith went immediately to the school-room, where she found her pupils awaiting her, and, ex-

cused her tardy appearance by saying that she had sat up very late, and consequently overslept herself. At dinner-time she learned from Matty that her cousin had concluded to take passage and sail for Europe that day fortnight, and had accordingly taken his departure from the Bluff that morning.

CHAPTER XV.

OVERSHADOWED.

“Eyes, look your last !
Arms, take your last embrace ! and, lips, O you,
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A dateless bargain to engrossing death !”

“Death lies on her like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.”

Weeks glided rapidly by. Edith was, if possible, more conscientious in the discharge of her duties, and was amply repaid for her pains in the rapid progress which her pupils made in their studies. Occasionally Mr. Ellis visited the school-room and listened to the recitations, and frequently sat in the parlor when she was giving the music-lessons. He seemed to experience a feeling of anxiety regarding her health, and often chided her for remaining so late in the school-room, and not taking more exercise. Finally he insisted upon her riding after school hours, with her pupils, and accordingly, every day the horses were found waiting at the door when the lessons were finished. With Uncle Anthony or Uncle Sigh in attendance, they would scour the country round the Bluff, often returning after nightfall ; but, notwithstanding this exercise, of which Edith was very fond, her cheeks lost its roundness and the color faded from it gradually until it looked wan and white.

Mr. Ellis proposed another short vacation, saying that he did not think the girls liked to study in warm

weather; but Edith informed him of her intention to return home in September, and expressed a wish to be allowed to make the most of the time while she was at the Bluff, as she had laid out a course of study which she wished her pupils to complete before she left them. Mr. Ellis regarded her earnestly as she leaned against the pillar of the piazza, and asked "if she thought her health would not permit her to remain another year?" She replied that her mother's health was delicate, and they all wished her to return home. He paced up and down with his firm, regular step, but without making further remark, and without seeming to notice her absence when she went into the house.

Later in the evening, when she was sitting in the library correcting French exercises, with the girls on either side of her, he entered with his paper, and, sitting down at the same table, in a few moments seemed wholly absorbed in its contents. Tying with her pencil, she raised her hand suddenly, and a ring which she wore fell to the floor; he stooped immediately, picked it up, and laid it on the table. Matty took it, and was about to replace it on Edith's finger when she said—

"Not that finger, dear; this one."

"Why, Miss Edith, you always used to wear it on your third finger."

"I know, my dear; but it is too large for that one now." She looked up as she spoke, but her glance fell immediately beneath the earnest, burning gaze of his brown eyes.

Matty retained the hand a moment; then placed

it on the table as gently as if it were made of wax, and as she did so arose from her chair. Edith felt something very like a tear drop on her wrist; and, looking up quickly, saw that Matty's cheek was wet. Waiting a moment not to attract the attention of Mary and her father, who was again buried in his paper, she quietly left the room, and followed her up stairs. Sobs fell on her ear as she opened the door of the girls' chamber, and on the bed lay Matty, weeping convulsively.

"Why, Matty, dear, what is the matter?" she asked, in her gentle, affectionate tones.

"O dear! Miss Edith, you are not happy," sobbed forth Matty.

"Not happy? What makes you think so, darling?"

"Because you—you told papa that you were going home, and you look so pale and thin, and sometimes so sad. O, Miss Edith!" And she threw her arms around Edith's neck, and pressed her cheek to her own tear-stained face.

"But darling, you must not distress yourself so. Am I not always cheerful?"

"Yes, Miss Edith, but not *happy*. Won't you stay with us, for we all love you so? *All* of us—Mary, and I, and *papa*! he does, Miss Edith; I know he does."

"Hush, darling! You know I have a mother and sister at home, and I cannot forget my duty to them," replied Edith, her own tears now mingling with Matty's.

"But they don't need you as much as—as papa

and Mary! Oh, do stay, dear Miss Edith, and when I am gone take my place."

"Gone? What do you mean, Matty?"

She did not reply, but renewed her sobs and clung still closer to Edith's neck. After waiting a moment, Edith urged—

"Tell me, dear, what you mean?"

"Miss Edith," said Matty, becoming suddenly calm, and raising her head from Edith's shoulder, "I am going to die, and I cannot bear the thought that papa and little Mary will be left alone."

"Matty," said Edith, rising, "you must not talk in this strain; I cannot permit you to distress yourself so foolishly." But she was far from being free from alarm, for Matty's hands were burning, and her face flushed, and in answer to Edith's question she said that her head "ached dreadfully."

"Come, my dear; let me undress you and get you into bed, and in the morning you will be all right."

"I do not like to go to bed, Miss Edith."

"Why not, my dear?"

"Because I shall never rise again."

"Do you not see how unhappy *you* are making me, Matty?"

"Well, I'll be undressed; but I cannot think of my prayers, my head throbs and beats so—"

"Never mind, my darling your *suffering* is a prayer the good God will not be unmindful of; I will say a litany for you."

"Thank you, Miss Edith; now if my head would only stop aching, I might get to sleep."

"Compose yourself, darling, and I will sing to you."

"Yes, Miss Edith, that's what I want—a hymn." And, putting one hand under her pillow, and the other on Edith's shoulder, she looked up into her face, and a smile played around her mouth as Edith commenced a familiar hymn to the virgin.

Before it was finished her eyes were closed, and, moving softly from her seat on the bedside, Edith hastened down stairs and communicated to Mr. Ellis her fears that Matty was seriously ill.

"She had the headache all day, but would not let me tell you, because she did not wish to trouble you," said Mary.

"Have you observed anything peculiar about her?" inquired Mr. Ellis.

"There was a rash out on her neck at dinner-time, but it all went off," answered Mary.

Mr. Ellis changed countenance, and said—"I will send to town for Dr. Elton; I cannot trust my own skill." And, calling Uncle Anthony, he ordered him to saddle the best horse, and take a note to Augusta immediately.

"Is there any disease prevalent in the neighborhood?" asked Edith, after Mr. Ellis had visited Matty and examined her skin closely.

"Scarlet fever," he answered, briefly. She asked no more questions, but, putting Mary into her own bed, prepared herself to watch beside Matty, who was becoming restless, and talked incoherently in her sleep. Her comatose, delirious symptoms seemed to alarm Mr. Ellis, and he endeavored to

arouse her for the purpose of administering a gentle medicine to modify the course of the disease, saying to Edith that scarlet fever generally terminated favorably without treatment unless of the malignant.

"Then it is scarlet fever?"

"No doubt of it," he replied, looking at his watch, then out of the window, anxiously. All the long night they watched beside her, and at the break of day the welcome sound of horses' feet fell on their ears. Dr. Elton's kind face presented itself at the door of the sick room, and with him Father Ward, to whom Edith had dispatched a note by Uncle Anthony.

In suspense they awaited the doctor's opinion; but he expressed none, and they could learn nothing from the immobility of his face, but they knew from his ceaseless efforts to arouse her, and from his resort at length to tonics and stimulants, that it was an extreme case. Her system seemed to be at once overwhelmed by the force of the disease, and the symptoms to evince an extraordinary degree of weakness. Her face was livid, the muscles relaxed, and her respiration preternaturally slow. Dr. Elton did not leave the room, scarcely the bedside, during the day. A few feeble attempts were made at reaction, but towards night her system ceased to make resistance, and, with a face betraying strong emotion, the doctor turned to Mr. Ellis and said, "There is no hope."

Without uttering a word, Mr. Ellis dropped his

head upon the pillow, his strong frame bowed in an agony of grief.

Matty opened her eyes, and, with a feeble effort, turned her head and said, "Papa!"

Her father raised his head and stepped forward so that she could see him.

"Papa"—he bent his head to catch her words—"Mamma is waiting for me now, and after a while I will wait with her for you, and Mary, and Miss Edith. Papa, you mustn't grieve for me, for I'm *very* happy. Where's Mary?"

Her sister had been kept from the room, much against her will, and when Edith opened the door and beckoned to her, she entered, and, throwing herself on the bed, uttered a cry of anguish.

"Don't, dear sister! I am only going home to tell mamma and God that you are coming. You are good, dear Mary, but be better, *be better*." She turned to Edith, who was on the other side of the bed, and motioned for her to put her head down. "*Stay* with them, Miss Edith, and love them, and comfort them, and, dear Miss Edith, *be* yourself happy. Tell all the people good-by; and—Nelly belongs to me—I give her to you, Miss Edith, to bring to heaven. Now, kiss me; when I am in heaven, I will pray for you; God sent you to prepare me for this early death, and you have been faithful, Miss Edith, but don't leave *them*. Wait till Papa is a *Catholic*, my *going* and your *staying* will make him one"—something of the old roguish smile played around her mouth, but it was transient. Turning to her father she said in a failing voice,

"dear papa, don't send Mary to Holy Communion alone."

"God willing, my precious child, *I will go with her*," replied the grief stricken father; a look of inexpressible happiness passed over Matty's face. The Crucifix which she held, she raised to his lips—then pressed it to her own; Father Ward who had administered the last sacraments during her first lucid interval, was kneeling with Edith, and reciting the prayers for the dying. Fainter and fainter came the words "Jesus" and "Mary" from those dying lips, until at length her hand relaxed its feeble hold of the Crucifix—and her last breath bore with it the sacred name of her Savior.

Mary's hand slid from beneath her father's, and, with a low moan, she dropped upon the floor. Good Dr. Elton, with the tears trickling down his furrowed cheek, raised her and conveyed her into Edith's room. The black people, who had gathered to receive a parting look from their beloved mistress, were sobbing aloud. Aunt Cilla sat crouching in the corner, rocking her body to and fro, her old frame quivering and her lips muttering—"De Lor' gins and de Lor' takes away; but dis ole heart *can't* bress his name, no how."

"Go down stairs, all of you," said Dr. Elton, kindly, after sending Aunt Cilla in the room to assist Edith, who, giving way to a momentary paroxysm of grief, aroused herself and with trembling hands composed the limbs of her beloved pupil and closed the white eyelids. Mr. Ellis watched her, and when she drew the sheet over the features of

his child, he said, "Will you give the necessary directions?" She nodded her head, and he left the apartment. Approaching Mary, who was sitting in the easy-chair, and to whom, with her head upon his shoulder, Dr. Elton was talking in low, soothing tones, he said a few words, and, taking her hand, together they went down to the library.

Aunt Cilla sent for a woman in the neighborhood, who came, and Edith selecting a white dress, the one worn on New Year's eve, assisted in robing the body, and when it was ready for the coffin she gazed long and lovingly on the placid features from which after death every trace of the eruption disappeared.

Dr. Elton had other patients, and he was obliged to return to town, and by him Edith sent to Mr. Morgan the news of his niece's death. Long were Mary and her father closeted in the library, and when late in the evening she came forth, her face, though it bore traces of violent grief, was calm, and her manner quiet. In a low voice she begged to be permitted to see Matty, and going with her to the room of death Edith turned down the sheet and disclosed the body of her beloved sister arrayed as on the night of Nora's party. Though in life Matty was not even pretty, yet in death she was beautiful. Dying early, before the disease had made any ravages, she was not wasted, but looked like one asleep in perfect health. Her short, plump hands were crossed over the Crucifix on her full bosom, and as a breath of air raised for a moment the purple ribbon that confined her sleeve, and its shadow played

on her white neck, Mary started as if she believed that life was not wholly extinct. The long eyelashes rested on the fair round cheek, and the abundant hair was wound in one massive braid around the noble head. The proud look which she wore in life had not wholly vanished, but to Edith it seemed like a triumphant expression, as if in the upper regions she was exulting in her victory over the world.

"Poor, dear Matty! No, not *poor* Matty, for she is richer than we are now, and papa says that we must not grieve for her, she died so happy," said, Mary, as she laid her head on Edith's bosom and sobbed out the grief she could not quiet.

That night Edith insisted upon sitting up with Aunt Cilla and Nelly; but Mr. Ellis would not permit her to do so, and sent her and Mary over to his chamber while he occupied the easy-chair in her room.

Late in the morning Mr. and Mrs. Morgan arrived; they were not accompanied by Nora to whom they had not communicated the news of her cousin's death, fearing that it might increase her melancholy. Mrs. Morgan supposed that the body of her niece would be placed beside that of her mother in the family vault at Augusta; but Mr. Ellis could not disregard the request his child had once made—to be buried near the little church she loved so well. Early the second morning, while the dew still sparkled on the flowers, and the birds were singing their matin hymns, the procession formed, and

slowly under the green arches followed the body of Matty Ellis to its last resting-place.

Though the sycamores still waved as green as when Matty played beneath their shade, and the sunlight beamed through its branches and danced on the dewy turf, yet oh, how *dead* everything looked! and how dark seemed the spot, when with a sepulchral sound the clods fell upon the coffin!

The last rites were performed, and all was over, and slowly and sadly they turned to retrace their steps. With loud shrieks, Mary threw herself frantically on to the grave. The violence of her grief alarmed them all, and when she refused to rise, refused to be comforted, Mr. Ellis turned a look almost of despair on Edith, she bent down and whispered in Mary's ear—

"You *must* arise, dear Mary, for you are only adding to your father's distress, and remember your sister's love for him."

Mary yielded, and allowed herself to be raised, and with a look of utter hopelessness on her young face, drew Edith's arm around her and suffered herself to be led back into the Church.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER THE FUNERAL.

The Morgans returned home immediately after the funeral. Edith retired to her room with Mary whose nervous condition was such as to require perfect rest and quiet. Mr. Ellis and Father Ward were closeted together in the library until the shades of evening gathered around the Bluff, then they came forth and Edith heard them pacing with almost measured tread up and down the long piazza.

"I have brought some tea up to young missus," said Aunt Cilla closing the door softly after her, "and you go down, honey, and pour out for massa."

Mary was asleep, the sleep of exhaustion, and Edith went down leaving Aunt Cilla in attendance.

Mr. Ellis left his tea almost untasted and went up to his child.

"I trust you have abandoned your design of returning to the north in the fall," said Father Ward when alone with Edith.

"I ought to go before fall," returned Edith, "my sister writes that mother is far from being strong."

"If you are needed at home I would advise you to go by all means, but I should regret any necessity that would compel you to leave here at present; there is no one to take your place; the sad state of affairs at Mrs. Morgans renders this diminished

household particularly desolate, and unless you should go home from a sense of duty, it would look like desertion.

"I will make known to you the contents of Gracie's next letter and then—"

"We'll decide," interrupted Father Ward as Mr. Ellis entered the room.

Edith had placed herself under Father Ward's direction when first she came to the Bluff. She had found him wise and kind, and submitted her judgment to his in all matters of importance. Her heart had been laid bare before him, its innermost secrets revealed; knowing her past so well his decision would be just and prudent.

The following week brought a letter from Gracie. Her mother was ailing, tho' not actually sick; they were all looking confidently for Edith's return in the fall, and Mrs. Stanford expressed herself decidedly unwilling that her daughter should remain from home another year.

"Then, you will go," said Father Ward when he came again and Edith read to him that portion of her sister's letter, and a page from her mother, "but you will come back when you can be spared—God will arrange it. He knows how much we need you at the little Church, how much your loss will be felt in the Catechism class, in everything in fact connected with His work here, and I feel confident that He will not remove you from this place altogether; my solicitude is entirely for those you leave."

"Yea, it will be sad for Mary to be left so entirely

to herself. But——" and Edith's face brightened at the thought "could we not persuade Mr. Ellis into letting her go north with me? He has frequently spoken of going sometime to Canada, and yes, I will propose it to him.

"There are still two months before you leave; the change would be of benefit to the child, and to himself: we'll see.

"The Fifteenth of August came with its beautiful feast, and true to his promise to the dying Matty. Mr. Ellis, having been received into the Church the week before, approached the sacraments with Mary and Edith. Thrice, the "Feast of the Assumption" had thus been celebrated by the family at the Bluff. With what complacency the mother of God must have looked down upon the household that each year furnished another convert to the faith, another "first communion" on the loveliest of her own feasts. And not one only for beside her "young missus" knelt the dusky form of *Nellie*, whom Edith had been instructing from the time of Matty's death.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

THE last of August found Edith making preparations to return home. Her school-room duties ceased with Matty's death; for Mary evinced such an aversion to her books, which were a constant remindant of her sister, that Mr. Ellis ordered them to be put out of sight, and the music lessons only were continued. Edith had maintained her cheerfulness, and her pleasant words and sweet smiles were, as ever, dispensed on all around, but the old light had faded from her eye and the color from her cheek. "I cannot spare her," Mr. Ellis had said when Edith made her petition for Mary "but I may bring her to you a little later."

It was toward the evening of a warm day, within one week of Edith's departure, that she returned with Mary from the Indian mound. They had been gathering flowers to spread over the still deeply mourned-for Matty, and wearied with her wanderings among the flower-beds, and overcome with the sultry heat, Edith threw herself on the sofa in the library, while Mary went down to the gate at the foot of the lawn to watch for her father, who had taken his accustomed Saturday evening ride to Chestnut Grove. The doors were all thrown open to admit any air that might be stirring, and taking off her hat Edith brushed the heavy bands of hair from her white temples, and with one hand beneath her

cheek, the other carelessly thrown over the back of the sofa fell asleep. Mr. Ellis returned by the way of the negro-quarter, and resting a moment beneath the shade of the sycamore that waved above the Indian mound, he proceeded to the house, and, stepping upon the piazza, entered the library. He stopped short on seeing the sleeping form before him, then softly approached the sofa and gazed upon the fair face of the sleeper with much the same expression as he had regarded the flowers on New Year's night. He drew a parallel. She, then so brilliant, so gloriously beautiful, as with burning cheek and sparkling eye she stood surrounded by Nora's friends, now so wan, so pale, so spiritless; so like those flowers which early in the day had looked fresh and lovely, reflecting their blushes in the bouquet of roses, but which he had found in the library thrown carelessly aside drooping and faded. Seating himself on a low ottoman near the sofa, he drew from his pocket a bundle of papers and letters. One small black lined letter he balanced in his hand, looking, with an anxious, distressed countenance upon the pale, sleeping face before him; she seemed scarcely to breathe, and he stooped to listen. His chestnut curls fell over her face and brushed her eyelids; with a quick start she awoke; looking around in bewilderment, her cheek which always flushed when his eye was upon her became a bright vermilion. He slipped the letters back into his pocket, and as she attempted to rise took her hand and drew her gently down again. With passionate earnestness, but almost utter hopelessness he said,

"*Edith, if you would only give your love to me!*"

His soft brown eye, rested on her face, from which the blood slowly receded, leaving it pale as before; looking into his face with a startled, wild expression, she slowly raised her hand, and placing it upon his shoulder, said—

"Do you mean it?"

"Mean it, Edith! it has been the cry of my heart for months."

She bent her head lower, still lower, until her breath fanned his cheek, and with that look which had once before lighted her face, and filled his heart with inexpressible happiness, she said—

"And it has been yours for months."

For a moment they forgot all else in their sudden happiness; at length he raised her face, so quietly happy, to his own, beaming with such unutterable joy, and said—

"Speak, Edith."

"What shall I say?"

"Tell me that all this time you have *not* been pining for Frederick; that it was *not* the dread of his becoming insane that prevented your giving yourself to him."

"Who told you that?"

"His mother."

There was a pause: at length she said—

"Now you speak to me."

"And what shall I say?"

"Tell me that all this time you have not regarded me only as *your ward*," she replied, archly.

"Did Frederick—"

"No, dear, I heard your conversation with him the evening before he left the Bluff."

"And did you love me even then? And was it from a fear of betraying your secret that you avoided my society?"

"I did not wish to foster an unrequited love," she replied, averting her burning face.

"And I tormented myself with the belief that you had conceived an unconquerable aversion for me! And you pined with the thought you were nothing to me but a ward! But for this awakening we might have been separated forever. I will always bless the impulse that impelled me to act."

A light step on the piazza notified them of Mary's approach. Edith drew to his side and said Mary will rejoice in the knowledge that you are going to remain with us, comfort us, and be yourself happy. Come here my daughter!" he said addressing Mary, who entered the room and regarded her father and Edith with a surprised, inquiring glance. She approached, and with his unoccupied arm he drew her to the sofa, and said, "Miss Edith is going home next week."

"I know it, papa."

"But dear she is coming back, as Matty requested, to remain with us always."

She did indeed rejoice, and her first happy laugh since Matty's death caused Aunt Cilla to shake her head, and with a look of apprehension say to Nelly—

"Crazy! sure's yer born."

But "the shadow creeps and creeps, and is forever

looking over the shoulder of the sunshine." At length, after making her repeat over and again her love for him, and making return assurances of his devotion to her, he said in a reluctant voice "But, Edith, I have something here that I fear will cast a shadow over our happiness"—and handed her the letter. She recoiled, and with one bound shrieked, frantically—

"Mother! Read it!"

He tore off the envelope, the black lines of which had told the sad news, and, laying her head against his shoulder, he held it there while he read the letter through.

"Yes, my poor, precious bird, your mother is—"

"Dead?" she screamed.

"She died of heart-disease," he answered, the tears, which refused to visit her own eyes, gathering in his.

She looked at him with a stony glance. He took her hands, which seemed turned to ice, and begged with words of love that she would speak to him; but her eyes moved not, and not a muscle of her rigid face relaxed. He read aloud the letter from her sorrow-stricken sister, hoping that its words of heart-breaking woe would melt her to tears; but she did not seem to hear him, and in a frenzy of despair he entreated her, to look up to *him*, reminding her that the hour in which she knew that she was bereft of a mother had given to her one who would be more than father, mother, or any other earthly friend. Hour after hour he sat by her side, striving by every art and word of endearment to

rouse her, but in vain; her faculties seemed suddenly paralyzed by the shock of her mother's death; and as the night waned, and she evinced no sign of returning animation, he became beside himself with grief and fear, and was about to dispatch a messenger to town, when Aunt Cilla said—

“Massa Jacob, s’posen yer unbox de portrait ob young missus, dat come dis mornin’, and show it to Miss Eden; p’raps it may bring her to.”

Mr. Ellis caught at the suggestion; and, breaking open the box, produced the portrait, so life-like as to make even himself start, and, after gazing a moment on the beloved lineaments of his child, placed the picture on the foot of the sofa, and then, calling for more light, he raised Edith so that her gaze would fall directly upon it. Holding his breath in suspense, he awaited the result, scarcely daring to hope that it would be a happy one.

A sudden, violent spasm passed over her face, then her eyes closed, and her whole frame seemed convulsed. A moment, and the long pent-up tears burst forth, and as Mr. Ellis bent over her trembling with emotion, agitation at the sight of the portrait of his daughter mingling with the agonizing suspense of the last few moments, she threw her arms around his neck, and on his bosom sobbed out her hysterical grief.

At length the force of her grief was spent, and after a few soothing words, Mr. Ellis gave her into Aunt Cilla’s charge.

“Bress her heart! I’ll put her to bed and talk to her ’bout her mudder; dat’ll make her cry, and

de more she cry now de more she won't cry arter awile."

"No, Cilla," said Mr. Ellis; "you had better keep her perfectly quiet."

"Humph!" said the old woman, when her master closed the door. "Young massa'm sleepy, I reckon. Who eber hearn tell ob a body bein' kep' quiet when der inard feelin's are all ob a rile like a pot ob boilin' soap? I didn't, nohow."

The next morning there was an utter prostration of both mind and body, rendering Edith incapable of physical action or mental effort. But the second day, when she met Mr. Ellis, she told him that she must start immediately for home, and seemed so firm in her determination that he did not strive to divert her from her purpose.

"When will you be ready, Edith?" he asked, drawing her to him.

"To-morrow," she replied.

"Can you not wait one day longer, darling?"

"O no! Gracy has no one with her but brother George, and I *must* go," she answered, the tears starting afresh at the mention of her sister's name.

"Very well, dearest; we will be ready also."

"We?"

"Yes, my poor bird, Mary and I. Did you think I would *send* you home?"

She pressed his hand in token of her thanks, and a faint smile lit up her face so white and haggard. Mary was wild with delight at being allowed to accompany her father and Edith, and as she assisted

in packing the trunks, Edith's subdued grief could scarcely restrain her girlish spirits.

The next day the carriage bore them to Augusta. Mrs. Morgan's astonishment was infinite when they presented themselves before her, and without bounds when she learned that they were to leave that evening for the North.

"But, Jacob, why need you go? Our merchants are going every day, and why not place Miss Edith in charge of one of them?"

"I do not wish to do so. Miss Edith will return with me as—"

"As what?"

"My wife."

"Your *wife*?"

"My *wife*!"

Mrs. Morgan was for a moment staggered; but she saw that the thing was inevitable, and she was too politic to raise vain opposition or even to express disapprobation. Mr. Ellis had learned her opinion of governesses some months before, and he had doubtless not forgotten it; and after a moment of reflection, she said—

"Well if it is to be, why not at once?"

"At once?" repeated Mr. Ellis, in a tone of inquiry.

"Yes, let the ceremony be performed here this afternoon."

"Would *she* consent?"

"If she takes the right view of the matter, she will not hesitate; the expediency of such a course cannot be questioned."

After a momentary hesitation, Mr. Ellis replied—
“No, Martha; I cannot suggest marriage to her while she is so crushed beneath the weight of her recent great bereavement.”

“Then when do you expect to return?”

“I cannot determine; she must decide. I design leaving Mary with her while I make a flying visit to Canada.”

Passing over the journey, the sad meeting of Edith with her brother and sister, we again find her in the retirement of her brother's farm. Nothing about the place has changed since she last crossed the threshold. The foliage is becoming tinted with the brilliant colors of the northern autumn, which it was assuming when she left home a year before. Vag still sits on his perch and picks the crumbs from his mistress's hand; the work table, with its basket and books, still stands by the window, and the rocking-chair by its side, but the seat is vacant and the busy needle is plied no more. Nothing changed, nothing altered! and yet to Edith it seemed another spot. “Home was not home without her mother.” She visited the white marble tablets above the spring house, and as the shade of the willow moved slowly over them, she remembered and related to Grace how that a year before, when she had looked back to catch a last glimpse of her friends, and saw her mother standing alone with the dark shadow resting over her, she had felt a secret, indefinable foreboding of a darker shadow in the future.

Mr. Ellis returned from Canada after a three

weeks' absence; after a long conversation with Edith he called Mary to him, and said—

"Mary, I am going home in a few days; will you accompany me or remain with Miss Edith until I return for her in the spring?"

After some hesitation, she replied, "Which do you wish me to do, papa?"

"I would prefer you to remain here, my daughter, you would find it very lonely at the Bluff, and you know that it is not pleasant at your Aunt Martha's, now your cousin sees no society."

"But, papa, won't you be very lonely without me?"

"I will miss you very much, my daughter, but the prospect of meeting my two treasures"—he smiled, as he repeated—"my *treasures* in the spring will keep me cheerful."

Spring came, and one day when Mary and Grace had gone forth to seek for the early violets and crocuses, leaving Edith alone, Mr. Ellis arrived. Oh, that was a joyful meeting between him and his beloved Edith! and with ineffable love he gazed into her sparkling eyes and upon her cheek, now tinged with the roseate hue of health! with what a glad smile he said. "Your native air has done much for you, my darling. Whenever you suffer from disease, I shall know the panacea to restore you to health!"

The meeting between himself and Mary was no less joyful, and when after her first great glad-

ness she returned to the door to pick up her crocuses and violets, he looked after her with a father's pride, and wondered that he had never before discovered her exceeding beauty. He looked from her to Edith, and back again to Mary; the caskets, he thought, were indeed lovely, but the gems of mind and heart which they contained were to him more lovely far.

George had concluded that it was not good for man to be alone, and when he learned that it was Edith's unalterable purpose to take Grace to Georgia with her, he expedited matters with a young friend of his sisters,' and two weeks after Mr. Ellis's arrival a double wedding was celebrated at the little farm. With feelings of regret, George parted with his sisters, but a mischievous smile played around Edith's mouth as she whispered in his ear, "Any fears of shabby treatment?"

In New York, where they stopped a few days on their way south, Edith met Charles Howard at the house of Mr. Acton. His wife's beauty more than equalled her expectations, and, during the evening they passed together, she frequently found her eyes wandering to the fair waxen face, the loveliness of which was half concealed by a wealth of floating ringlets. Mrs. Howard was tall, much taller than Edith, with a figure of considerable *embonpoint*, and a dashing, imperious way about her that showed her to be a petted, spoiled child of fortune. Twenty months had wrought a wonderful change in Charles Howard's appearance! an accumulation of flesh had destroyed the intellectual expression of his counte-

nance, and rendered his movements heavy and indolent in the extreme; his eye had lost its sparkling animated expression, and its somewhat bleared appearance aroused a suspicion in Edith's mind that he was no stranger to the wine-cup. He seemed totally oblivious of the presence of his wife, and devoted himself to Emily (Mrs. Acton), whom he playfully called "aunt," and to Grace, whose sudden assumption of dignity when he addressed her aroused for a moment the old mirthful look which used to play over his face when exceedingly amused. But after the first greeting he seemed to avoid Edith, scarcely glanced at her, and she turned from his altered face to that of her own noble-looking husband, and thanked the destiny which a year and a-half before had led her from his then dangerously fascinating society, and given her a heart all nobleness and truth, and which would be faithful even unto death.

We pass over a period of four years, to Edith and her husband years of unalloyed happiness—; The home circle at Beech Bluff was the most loving and united, but two of the links are to be severed and on Edith's brow rests a cloud of sadness. The mansion is thrown open, and from the portals go forth Mary and Grace, who in the brilliancy of youth and beauty have chosen such widely different paths. As the bride of George Elton the good old doctor's son Grace will soon be separated from her sister by the broad waters of the Atlantic. Recently appointed Consul to Berlin young Elton has hastened his wedding, and Mary goes with the bridal pair as

far as Charleston, there to enter upon her novitiate in the Convent of Our Lady of Mercy; as the humble *Religious*, the servant of God, she thinks she will "*be better*," and with her dying sister's words still ringing in her ear, and her father's blessing on her head, she leaves the home of her childhood and consecrates her young heart and life to the service of her Divine Lord—; like that other Mary, she has chosen the "*better part*."

Nora's melancholy was of long continuance, often accompanied by partial insanity; but her parents did not lose hope that her mind would be restored, until one day a letter from Fred, accidentally falling into her hands, revealed to her that he had seen Cavelli in Italy, a member of the chain-gang. He had bought an office under government, committed a fraud, and been sentenced to the galleys for life. From that moment she became a hopeless maniac, and, subsequently, when the news of Fred's death reached home, Mrs. Morgan's reason tottered on its throne; but after months of illness, during which she was brought near to the door of death, she arose from her couch, a Catholic Christian bowing to the will of the Almighty.

Fred died in Florence of the slow Italian fever, often so fatal to foreigners, and in the full possession of his intellect, blessed God that he should not live to be insane. Among his effects was found a small box addressed to "Edith Ellis." In the presence of her husband she opened it, and disclosed a few withered flowers, and a frail, delicate chain of the golden gum-shell-lac.

Years have passed; but Edith's eye is still undimmed, her step as light, and her voice as musical as when she first looked out upon the "goodly heritage of the house of Jacob," and her cheek has not become stranger to the blush which then made it so beautiful. But her married life has not been all sunshine, for, beside Matty, sleeps a fair babe, whose little light went out ere it had flickered a single month. Dear, precious babe! how the mother's heart yearned for the soft cheek which, for such a brief period, was nestled to her breast!

It was heart anguish to lay her darling beneath the green turf—to feel the emptiness of the arms that had cradled the little one so lovingly; but she rendered back the gift to its Maker saying, with the Christians meekness "Thy will be done." Brightly over the memory of the lovely bud, transplanted from earth to heaven, beams the light of a sure faith, that she shall one day behold it blooming, a perfect flower, in the sunlight of Paradise.

AGNES.

CHAPTER I.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

"WILL you take it, John?"

"No!"

"Not for my sake?"

"Graven images are forbidden in my Scripture."

"The questioner was Agnes Burton, the answerer her only brother. The sister was sitting on a low stool, her gauzy muslins floating around her like a cloud; in their folds nestled her white hands clasping a silver crucifix. Her head drooped, and its wavy, golden hair gleamed 'neath the bright light of the chandelier; the sweet young face wore a sad disappointed look as she leaned over and imprinted a coaxing kiss on her brother's hand, lying idly on the arm of his chair.

"Take it only as a keepsake from me, dear brother," she entreated.

"Why not a book!" he exclaimed, starting suddenly forward and gazing into her face with a look half of anger, half of contempt. "Something I

can enjoy! why press upon my acceptance an emblem of the superstition and error I abhor?"

"Oh, John! is belief in a crucified Lord superstition—error?"

"Not in a crucified, risen, ascended Lord. But for the mind and heart to be drawn from the spiritual to the visible—from the worship of the true God to the worship of images and pictures; from the truth to the mere form by which it is expressed—is idolatry, superstition. I would but countenance you in embracing a religion I detest, did I accept that bauble, your veneration of, alone prompts you to present. Give me that little gold heart on your chain, Aggy," and his voice lost its sternness while his face relaxed into a sort of smile. "And I will wear it as a keepsake from my Papist sister."

Agnes sprang to her feet; quickly she unclasped the chain from her own throat and secured it around her brother's; tucking it beneath his collar she sank on her knees beside his chair and seemed in an ecstasy of delight.

"And you will always wear it, John? never part with it—the heart I mean—even though you should be in direst need?"

"A gift never to be parted with," he returned in a mock solemn tone.

She threw her arms about his neck, kissing his cheek and brow, and for the remaining hours before his departure flitted about him like a bird. The tears were ever coming, but she dashed them away and a jubilant expression settled over her face, not unnoticed by her brother's searching jealous eye.

"Aggy, we are divided against ourselves—we cannot stand. We are no longer all in all to each other—you are falling away from me—a barrier has come between us, and you seem even to be glad I'm off—I see it in your eye."

"I was thinking at that moment of the little keepsake, John, and was so glad I had something you would accept," she answered, meekly.

"I would take anything, Agnes, but one of your religious gew-gaws. But there goes my trunk—I must follow."

"Oh, John, my brother!" It was a wailing, despairing sort of cry that went out from the pale lips, and she crouched down as one stricken by a sudden blow.

"Agnes, my only sister, listen to me; listen to your brother's parting words. You know I leave you only to go into danger, and I seek but your best interest. We may not meet again, certainly, not if we both live, until you recall me by a rejection of all this absurdity. If my life is not spared, then remember my parting words. Seek Christ aright, in His written word, rest upon His finished work, and trust alone to His prevailing intercession. You have resigned yourself to a strange influence; you are running after strange Gods, but I leave you in God's hands, He will bring you out of the fearful depths into which you have fallen. As He is my witness, I would rather have followed you to your grave, and left you resting beside our father, than to have found you so wedded to your idols. When you bid me, I will come again."

One convulsive embrace and he was gone.

CHAPTER II.

SEPARATED.

"AGNES! Agnes! will you wake up?" exclaimed a sturdy little voice the next morning; vigorous young hands pulled at the bed-clothes, and then moist, rosy lips were pressed on the tear-stained cheek of the young convert. The golden hair was brushed back in a tangled mass, and the heavy eyes opened languidly as she turned her face toward the little three-year old cousin, and drew his baby cheek down to her own. She was so weary—wearied in mind and body—wearied of the struggle that had gone on so long—so many yesterdays, and to be continued, perhaps, innumerable to-morrows. Coaxed, scolded, threatened, controverted by turns, until there came moments when to "give up" seemed the only alternative to end the contest; moments when concession seemed almost wrung from her; then a single aspiration, a clasp of the crucifix around her neck and she was strong again. Mere human resolution would have yielded; a supernatural strength seemed to sustain her, and she knew that God was with her—that His own right hand was bearing her up.

But now John was gone; his visit had left her prostrated physically and mentally, and when the baby voice aroused her from the heavy sleep she had fallen into after a night of weeping, she turned wearily on her pillow. Recalling what had passed

the preceding evening, that her brother was indeed gone from her, she hid her face with a moan. Then the thought of what this bitter struggle would be to her in the end, raised her for a moment above her heart's trouble—but for a moment only; the aching void was still there, and could not yet be filled even by the love of Heaven.

Little Willie tugged at the bed-clothes, and called to her in his impatient, childish way to "get up." He was her pet, and she often dressed him when he came to her in the early morning bringing his clothes. This particular morning the little man was boisterous, vociferous in his demands to be dressed. Agnes was nervous, and her heart ached; but she performed the office of nurse, and buttoned and tied, and brushed until the little toilette was completed. During its performance the restless subject clamored loudly for a story. Agnes had herself spoiled him, and so she must continue the indulgence. The story was told in a weak, trembling voice, to be sure, but she managed to satisfy her audience and control herself.

"Where's your Heart, Cousin Agnes?" suddenly exclaimed the child.

"Oh, the gold Heart? Yes; I had forgotten. I gave it to brother John, my pet."

"He was naughty to take it; it's too pretty for him," and the rosy face put on a frown.

Agnes' own face brightened; she had unlimited faith in the virtue of the relic and the tiny miraculous medal enclosed in the heart-shaped case. She smiled at the remembrance of her brother's

asking so innocently for the very "gew-gaw" he professed to despise.

"Who knows what it may lead to," she murmured; "oh, how hard I must pray!"

One whole year she had waited for her brother's consent to her receiving Catholic Baptism, and yet was that consent or sanction withheld. He had said, "wait till I come," and she had waited. His coming had ended her season of probation, and now that he was gone with the knowledge that she had paid every consideration due him as a brother—though the matter presented itself to her mind as one resting only between herself and her Maker—she was free to act. That very day she made her renunciation of the faith in which she had been reared. Agnes was but eighteen; an orphan, but loved—and spoiled—had that been possible—by the uncle of whose family she formed a member. Not as a dependent, for an ample provision was made for her support by her only brother. An army officer, he was ever on the wing; it was only at long intervals and in brief visits he saw the sister in whom his very soul seemed wrapped. Children of a Lutheran clergyman, it would seem that they were both removed as far from Catholicity as the east from the west. Member of a strict Lutheran family, how was it possible for Catholic doctrines to be presented to Agnes' mind?

"Agnes a Catholic! Impossible," exclaimed Captain Burton, on reading her first letter conveying the intelligence of her contemplated change. He repulsed the thought, and immediately wrote

treating the matter as a joke, begging her not to repeat it. It pained him, he said, to know that the subject of Romish error should have ever found a place in her thoughts. It was an insult to the memory of their father whose life and labors had been given to the Lutheran ministry. And besides it might start a train of ideas, disturbing to his sister's peace of mind. One never knows what may be the end of such notions. "Write, rather, that you contemplate matrimony; that your long cherished dream—and mine—of your presiding at your brother's board, when he returns to private bachelor life, is abandoned, and I will relinquish all thought of my home being made bright by your sunny presence—even I may come to kneel at your wedding benediction."

The answer came, admitting of no question in his mind of his sister's serious determination to embrace the Faith they had both been brought up to despise. She wrote as follows:

"Yes, dear brother, you have written me a welcome, though a disappointing letter, and you desire a speedy reply. Welcome, inasmuch as it conveys to me the assurance of your continued health and safety, and in the many endearing expressions with which its pages abound; confirming my full confidence in the steadfastness of your affection. Disappointing, as regards the subject now nearest my heart, and which you are pleased to treat as a jest. Since our dear father's death—one year, the coming spring—I have given the subject of religion my closest attention. During that most rebellious sor-

row, I one day was returning from our father's grave—a grave in which a dead past seemed buried—and wandered into a Catholic churchyard, the gate of which stood invitingly open. The sun was almost setting; I sat down in the slanting shadow of a large cross and listened to the swelling tones of an organ. A sudden impulse prompted me to enter the church. The altar was one blaze of light, and the sweetest hymn I had ever listened to was being sung by the choir.

"What is this service?" I asked of a young girl kneeling near the entrance.

"The Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament," she whispered.

The music ceased; the silvery sound of a bell fell upon my ear; then the most solemn silence prevailed. Involuntarily I knelt; never had I felt so near to God; for a moment I seemed to be visited by that peace I believed depended on God's will, and which I had so begged Him to bestow. I did not pray, I hardly thought; I simply seemed to cling to the cross; to place myself in our Lord's presence. It was not faith, it was no religious act, not even intended as devotion. But calm came to me—unspeakable comfort—light dawned on my sinful repining; and from that hour I loved the very atmosphere of that Sacred Temple. What seemed to me, in my complete absorption, the sudden rustling of angel's wings, brought me back to earth; it was but the simultaneous rising of the congregation, and I too arose. How I yearned to approach the side altar, bathed in violet light, and

implore the intercession of that Blessed Mother—the woman who so well knows our unrest—our needs—has felt them all! How I longed for that blessed belief teaching that those who procede us to the better land, are still with us, still love us, and aid us in our prayers before the Throne. But more than all—beyond all price of consolation in be reavement—the belief that our petitions here below ascend as incense before the Sovereign Judge, and incline him to mercy, to pardon for the precious ones whom we mourn. What earthly treasure would I not have, at that moment, bartered to be able to kneel in truth and say, “Lord, I believe.” I returned home, comforted, almost resigned. I knew but little of the tenets of the Catholic Church, but I saw the loving side of the faith—nothing cold, abstract, but something near my beating, struggling heart, something which brought it consolation, sweet and tender. From that day my heart was Catholic, though for many months my stubborn head remained Lutheran. Need I say that I longed to know more of a Church that had the power to give even to one outside the pale such a delicious moment of peace. I visited the Catholic book-stores and sought for authors who would enlighten me. I read for months without informing Uncle Henry of the character of my studies. Aunt noticed a change and imputed it to the natural wearing away of grief from a youthful heart. Uncle was pleased to think my natural strength of mind was asserting itself. The result of my investigations was an entire and full belief in all the truths

of the Church as revealed by Almighty God. Then it was, dear brother, that I wrote to you; I had made them here at home acquainted with the matter, and, as I expected, met with a steady opposition. They think my mind is unsound, I believe. The Pastor of the church beneath whose cross I rested, and whom I had sought, advised no step until I should hear from my brother. And now that you know all, will you still treat my desire to enter the Church as jest, or send me a loving consent? You have ever consulted my happiness, and believe me, dear John, this is indispensable to it."

* * * * *

No! The brother was inflexible; consent to error he could not grant. A request, almost a command, to wait one year until she should have seen him, and then—though he would never sanction her adoption of the Romish creed—she would be at liberty to do so, if she remained of the same mind, which he questioned, however. He thought the sentiment of her nature had alone been touched by those features which, in his phraseology, appealed only to the senses. Music, lights, pictures, flowers, were baits thrown out to attract the sentimental. He tried reasoning, arguing, and when he found that she could send him an answer to every objection, that he could not combat her arguments or weaken her faith, he changed the tone of his letters: he "detested controversy," and advised her to turn elsewhere for a theological conquest, not waste her sophistry on him. She did not remind him that she was simply making her defence, to which

his attacks challenged her. His letters became marvels of tenderness; he knew that the thought of giving him such pain, the knowledge of his real sorrow, would be the strongest argument he could now bring to bear, and his letters were full of grief, and yet she could remain inflexible.

The year passed, and we have seen the result of his visit.

Days, weeks, months went by, and an occasional brief, cold letter was all the communication the brother vouchsafed to send—no allusion to the cause of difference—and Agnes wrote the same loving, sprightly letters as of old, as though no difference existed. She did not measure the length of her communications by his, but reported fully everything of interest. She wrote with the freshness of youthful spirits, with the kindliness of a true, warm-heart, and with all the charming playfulness of a brain devoid of evil fancies. Her letters were as sunbeams on his dull camp life; or, when after a brush with the Indians, and hair-breadth escapes, away off on the frontier, he found two or more awaiting him on his return to the Fort, he settled down with pipe in his mouth and read with intense satisfaction the cheerful, refreshing pages, and accepted them as a delightful proof that his sister's heart was not being weaned away from him by all that religious frippery and nonsense. She had been all in all to him since Death had knocked so sharply at the door of their father's parsonage. And it was hard to think such a mighty barrier should come between them. At first he felt as

widely separated from her as though the broadest ocean rolled between. His visit had been a failure, a mortifying failure, as well as a disappointment. Divested of all the usual joy of their meeting; shorn of every pleasure, and marred by his own unyielding prejudice, and her steady resistance, it offered nothing pleasant for him to look back upon. Her letters were precious to him, but he could not allow her, for a moment, to think that he regarded either her or them with the slightest favor. "And then she'll come round," he argued, "for its mighty hard to feel that you've driven off your only one in the wide world—even if Heaven *is* at the bottom of it all—and I believe Aggy is sincere in thinking so—but she isn't one to stand the alienation long; she'll hold out a little longer, and then she'll give in. I felt badly about that crucifix," he soliloquised, "but I couldn't give in when she wouldn't; I couldn't be less firm than she; and I've had a degree more of self-respect since I stuck to that *No*! though it *did* almost stick in my throat, and seemed to have a plurality of o's in it the size of a barrel hoop."

He clasped his hands above his head, stretched himself, studied for a few moments, then knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"After all, I don't know why those Catholics should have the monopoly of the Cross. It's the emblem of the redemption of sinners, and God knows I'm the chiefest among them. But here's my little Heart—talismanic I'm sure."

He drew it forth and viewed it on all sides for

the hundredth time since it had been in his possession, and for the hundredth time repeated;

"I wonder why Aggy was so cheerful all of a sudden when I asked for this *bijou*! Something jesuitical about it, I'll be bound."

CHAPTER III.

IN FAITH.

"BY George! Captain, you've had a pretty smart brush this time, from all accounts," exclaimed a senior officer—one who had been on the sick-list—entering the Captain's tent.

"Yes, those Indian hounds came within an ace of scalping your most Obedient; I'm not quite sure they didn't," he laughed carelessly and rubbed his head.

"You're all right, my man, thank God! But they do say your escape was miraculous. I believe the soldiers are getting up a superstition about you. But, seriously, Burton, accept my congratulations; your bravery is the miracle that's won us more than one victory."

That night John wrote to Agnes, and relaxed somewhat from the severity of his late style. He even mentioned the superstition of the soldiers, and asked playfully if the little gold heart possessed any virtue unknown to him; all it owned in his eyes being the constant remindant of his darling sister."

This was the most affectionate letter, and brotherly, he had written since they parted.

What tears of thanksgiving she shed over it, for she felt almost that he had been restored to her. Her life was one long prayer of patience; for patience is a prayer when one waits and hopes, and the object of that waiting and hoping is still as far

in the dim distance, and only seen with the eye of Faith. Thus Agnes had waited for the first indication of her brother's relenting. Often when almost overcome with the weariness of the long waiting, she had seemed to hear the Master's voice—"Come up in faith to me that ye may gain new strength for the conflict,—your life is indeed a warfare, but remember the prize set before you; hold out courageously to the end, and seek not for rest below; here only can it be found—among the children of God. When friends fail and hearts grow cold—when those who once loved, love no longer—when the dearest and tenderest ties are riven, and you are lonely and weary, remember that I too was forsaken by those whom I loved, and that I bore my own cross on my way to Calvary. I have entered into my glory and you too shall enter into the mansion of your Lord and go no more out forever." These words dwelt in her memory, and she commenced a new waiting, believing that her brother would yet drink of her pleasure, and in the end, his voice would help to swell the general chorus of thanksgiving and adoration. She had never seemed to love her brother so much as when she pressed this last letter to her heart. She had so longed to ask him about the little keepsake—if he wore it, which however she could not doubt since he had promised—but if he wore it about his neck as she had clasped it—and not in his pocket in his old, careless way. But she had refrained from the mention of it, and waited for him to say the first word of the—to her—priceless Heart.

His letter was so short, but then it was all tenderness though he did not mean that it should be so. Somehow the vision of his sister in her cloud of fleecy muslin 'neath the light of the chandelier; her wavy golden hair, and her white hands clasping the silver crucifix, often came before him in that far off wilderness. It had become so photographed on his brain that in the very tumult of forest warfare it appeared, and he seemed to hear her voice repeating the words—"Oh John! is belief in a crucified Lord, superstition?"

About this time occurred a treaty with the Indians—the treaty of Ghent, perhaps, and Captain Burton remained but a few months longer in the West, and moving from place to place as the interest of the service called him. He had been advanced to the rank of Captain by his success in skirmishes with the red men; now, after his last exploit, a most gallant defence of his post, he received a commission conferring on him the rank of brevet-Major. All this was glorious news to the sister whose pride in her brave brother was only excelled by her love and anxiety for his soul's best interest. It was gratifying to know that his comrades and his country had by his skill and bravery been inspired with confidence in his abilities as an officer. But then there were other, dearer tidings that she hoped one day to hear; this hope held the first place in her heart; deeper than her pride in his gallant daring, or even her joy in his safety. It was the hope of having him one day kneel in the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle and profess his belief in the

one true Faith. To this end, all her prayers and communions tended; she never thought of his meeting death, even though in dangers so great, but as a Catholic Christian. This prayer of faith, ever rising, could not but prevail.

CHAPTER IV.

SUMMONED.

THE war in Florida was now at its first stage, and Captain, now Major Burton, was ordered to that country. Here the army was exposed to every danger almost without the power of defence; so strangely did the Indians conduct the warfare on their part. Peril and difficulty attended every movement. Knowing well what he would have to face, Major Burton felt a yearning once more to behold his sister's face. His pride and obstinacy had at length succumbed to the sweet spirit of her letters, though she had not yet bid him come by an avowed return to Lutheran doctrines.

It was a bright December morning, early in the month, and early in the morning, too, for two heads were asleep on one pillow. One curly brown, the other wavy gold. Little Willie had been very ill, and Agnes had taken him under her especial charge. He was now two years and more older than when he called her with his quaint little voice "to get up," that memorable morning after the parting, when she thought the world almost a wilderness without her brother's love.

"Don't get up yet, cousin Agnes," begged the weak voice, as she stirred and aroused him from his slumbers. "Tell me something about Christmas; its the Good-man's birth-day, isn't it?"

"Who said so pet?" asked Agnes, leaning over

on her elbows and kissing the wan cheek of the invalid.

"Sister Maggie; will I have any birthdays when I go to heaven?"

"Heaven will be one long, happy birthday," replied Agnes; birth-days being the paradise of Willie's thoughts.

"Only one! Then Washington didn't go to heaven, did he?"

"Why not?" his cousin asked, bewildered by what she feared were wanderings.

"Because he has lots of birth-days—don't you know?"

Agnes explained. The two faces were close together, and Washington, and Christmas and birth-days were being settled properly in Willie's understanding when the door opened and admitted his mother.

"What have I?" Her hand was in her pocket.

"My breakfast," said the child.

"Oh, John! John!" exclaimed Agnes, bounding to the floor.

"You stupids! Could I bring either John or the breakfast in my pocket?"

"Not John himself, but a letter—I know it is."

Yes, it was a letter, and Willie and birth-days were forgotten.

"To Florida!" she almost gasped, "oh aunt, he is ordered to those horrid swamps."

"Read on, my child, he may come home first."

And she did read on: then with a cry of joy dropped her head into her hands, the tears trickled

through her fingers and her whole frame shook with emotion.

"What is it?" Do for pity's sake tell," exclaimed Willie's mother in a tone of consternation.

"What's the matter, cousin Agnes?" asked Willie, whose great wondering eyes were staring from the bed-clothes, and ready to fill from sympathy, though he wasn't quite clear as to what he was to cry for, not for cousin John, certainly, who had carried off the pretty Heart; but Agnes, whom he loved, was weeping, and so he too must shed some tears.

"He's coming to spend Christmas with us, the first Christmas since father's death," said Agnes, with trembling voice, dropping her hands and looking up through tears of joy.

It was even so. His application to pursue his journey to the "swamps" by way of his old home, had met with a favorable response; even now he must be on his way.

Willie did not like this advent of Agnes' brother who always made her cry, when he went and when he came again; but Agnes made him understand that she liked it, and so the little fellow tried to be agreeable, though his young brain was obviously confused on the matter of the tears, if she liked his coming so much.

Happy Agnes! It had been, in spite of the happiness conferred by her religion, a bitter trouble to be at odds with her only brother, even though she had right on her side. John was right; Aggy, of herself, could not have stood it; but she had been

the recipient of a special grace by which she had thriven. Never looking back to that happy, careless life, when her father's, brother's love made up its sunshine, she went bravely on into the valley of years before her, comforted, sustained, by that rod and staff whose support would never fail so long as she clung to them. The father and brother were ever in her thoughts. The one with the most loving, though at times, mournful memory. The other with an abiding affection, united to an ardent hope, whose light, time and distance could not dim. But the *old life* she never dwelt upon; the present was her's to care for, and the future to look to.

The glad tidings of a speedy reunion with her brother, not only made her supremely happy, but furnished much food for thought and speculation. Could it be that he received with more favor her change? That he had given the subject his attention, and was coming with a mind no longer prejudiced, though perhaps himself no nearer the Church! Or was it the force of his natural affection overcoming pride, resentment, detestation of an opposed faith, and bringing him contrary to his resolution to her side? She hoped for the best, and was happy beyond all expression. Willie was fractious and exacting; no hand but cousin Agnes' could minister to his wants acceptably, and she gave herself up to him though she longed to be before the tabernacle offering her thanksgiving. Every morning found her stealing from Willie's side for the first Mass; frequently approaching the Sacraments, and bending low before the Blessed Lady's altar.

With what faith and love she implored the intercession of the Mother who "knew her needs." The day in Willie's room was but a silent continuation of the morning's supplications.

CHAPTER V.

"JOHN'S FRIEND."

"**MAN** proposes—God disposes." Even in life's trivialities how perpetually in this adage re-verified. The brother's design of a meeting with his sister before entering upon his new career was not to be carried out precisely as he had formed it. It was the week before Christmas. John was daily expected. In the light of the same chandelier, 'neath which Agnes had sat so sadly more than two years before, she and Willie—now quite recovered—were engaged in a romp. Her bright intelligent eyes were full of vigor and life, and her laugh was such as only comes from a heart free from sorrow or guile. On the same chair wherein her brother had sat so stiffly and refused the Cross, but accepted condescendingly the Heart, was lying her work—a smoking cap—his Christmas gift—to be. The room looked quite the same as when he held her hands and implored her, by the memory of their father, to come back to the old faith and to him.

"There Willie, that will do! I must go to my work, or cousin John will have to smoke without a cap."

"There's the bell; somebody's come, and you can't sew, and I'm glad," laughed the child.

Agnes listened. It was only a neighbor leaving her uncle's letters, which he often brought from the office as an accommodation.

"A letter for you, Miss Agnes," said the servant.

"A letter! Not from John, certainly, for he ought to be here soon," said Willie's mother.

The handwriting was strange, and for a moment a terror seized Agnes' heart; but she opened it and glanced first at the signature. The name was strange too. Then she read that John had been overtaken by a sudden illness, and was lying at the writer's home, about two days journey from his sister. He was not dangerously ill, but she must come to him, as the detention would necessitate a direct route to Florida, immediately on his recovery, and he could not abandon the idea of seeing Agnes. Then followed her itinerary, and the writer's name—Col. J. Crossland.

"I'll go, of course!"

"And not come back for Christmas?" vociferated Willie, more than ever set against John.

"We wanted you to share a particular joy with us on Christmas," said the Doctor—her uncle—"but John has the first claim, and so we must say God speed. I would go with you if I could leave my practice; however you will be remembered in our Christmas prayers."

"If they were only Catholic prayers, uncle?"

A look passed between her uncle and his wife—were they smiling in derision? In the excitement of preparation and then of the journey, the look was forgotten, to be remembered when she received their Christmas greeting.

All the land was bathed in twilight—a winters' twilight so pleasant beside an open grate—when

the glowing coals throw a flood of light over the room—mellow, golden light; and one can build castle in the coals and air, such as in the commonplace glare of daylight or gas light would never be dreamed of.

The twilight was deepening when Agnes arrived at the home of her brother's friend. In the mellowness of the fire light she found the two—brother and friend—the former reclining on a couch drawn up before the grate, and the friend sunk in the depths of a large easy-chair.

"Miss Burton!"

"Agnes!"

"John!" was the simultaneous exclamation that burst from the three. Agnes was on her knees beside her brother's couch; on his face was a mystified look of amazement.

"I did not expect you until to-morrow," said the Colonel, with embarrassment.

"You expect my sister!—to-morrow!" Then Agnes' face too assumed a helpless expression of wondering surprise.

"The letter, John! I got the letter and started that night."

"Letter!" John had become an echo.

"Oh, hang it! excuse me, Miss Burton, but it's all wrong—I mean it's all right! bless me, if I know what I do mean; but let me make a confession. Your brother did not know of my writing. I had intended telling him all to-night, and have a welcome prepared for you to-morrow; but you've anticipated me. Let me explain, That unreasonable,

precipitous human lying there—whom you can see is not fit to stir from the house—determined to start to-morrow in order to spend Christmas with his sister; to travel over a rough road when he staggers across the room; to knock himself up completely—that's what he wanted—so as not to have to face the Florida arrows. I had too much respect for his uniform—I couldn't permit it, and so I sent for you to come and thereby save his life and honor."

She saw it all; the goodness of this brother-officer who was now trying to cover up his almost womanly consideration. It was such a grateful look that beamed from Agnes' eyes upon her brother's friend.

"Oh, don't be too grateful! There's a good bit of selfishness mixed up in all this apparent hospitality."

"Selfishness!" again echoed John; I wish all the world were as selfish, Colonel; how can I ever thank you?"

"By holding your tongue;" replied his friend, bluntly; "keep quiet and don't agitate yourself; I repeat selfishness is at the bottom of it. Miss Burton (your brother hasn't had the manners to introduce us), I have been steeped in envy;" (he was giving John time to recover from his surprise), "I haven't a mother, sister, or single feminine tie in the known world; that man has aggravated me beyond endurance with the reading of delightful, womanly letters, and recounting daily all your sisterly doings. He exasperated me, and so I worried him into inviting me to join him in making the fly-

ing visit to the sister he was always parading before me."

"I considered it the greatest honor, Colonel—"

"Don't interrupt me, Major. The invitation was not sincere; you feigned sickness to keep me from knowing her, and so I took the matter out of your hands—but here's father, he hasn't a sister either."

"Not this side of heaven, Jerome," interrupted an old gentleman, advancing into the room; "but I've two there, I believe," he extended his hand frankly to Agnes. "And so you are the little Papist the Major is so proud of; why haven't you brought him to your way of thinking?"

"He'll come, sir, in God's own good time," she replied, with a side glance at her brother.

"So he will, my child, so he will; we'll have him yet."

"We! are *you* a Catholic? And you?" turning to the Colonel.

"Very bad ones; but that's no fault of the Church," he answered.

"Speak for yourself, if you please, my son; I don't consider myself a bad one, though I fall far short of being good," pleasantly returned the old gentleman.

"Why, John, you never told me—"

"That I had a superstitious, idolatrous Popish friend? Not I; I couldn't encourage you, you know;" answered her brother, falling into his friend's humor; "but it's my misfortune—so don't blame me, Aggy, or maybe we'll get into a broil."

"You will do us the kindness to make yourself

quite at home, Miss Burton; the Major is convalescing—but he won't be out for some days."

"How much we owe you!" said Agnes, in a voice trembling and husky.

"Nothing at all, I assure you; I shall be rejoiced to be able to say in future that *somebody's* sister came and made this forlorn, bachelor wilderness to blossom as the rose. Behold! how everything has brightened already; I believe you, John, sisters are a God-send." He left the room as he spoke, and the brother and sister were alone.

"That was so like him, Aggy—the writing of that letter. It was he who obtained my promotion, though he professes to know nothing about it. I could not enumerate his many acts of kindness." The Major's hand was resting on his sister's shoulder, and she thought it trembled. "It will all be known one day, Aggy—all his goodness, and what a bright record he will have.

"I am so thankful, John, you have such a friend; my mind will be more at ease regarding your welfare. But why did you not mention him in your letters? You have written of Captain this one and General that one, but never a word of Colonel Crossland."

"Perversity, Agnes; he had one fault in my eyes, and I couldn't bring myself to speak of him; Catholic, you know."

"Oh, John! yet so prejudiced?"

"We won't discuss it, Aggy! But I think here's the housekeeper to carry you off."

An elderly woman closed the door and stirred the

fire, then said she was ready to show the young woman her room. It was a neat, though rather dingy chamber that she entered, a room that looked somehow out of use; a fresh, bright fire was in the grate, and threw a ruddy glow over the old-fashioned furniture.

"It was Mrs. Crossland's room," said the house-keeper, "and has scarcely been used since she died, years ago, when the Colonel was but a boy. We have no lady visitors to fix up for, the Colonel always away and the old gentleman traveling about, to keep near the Colonel, sometimes I think."

The woman's volubility evidenced a scarcity of "lady visitor." She was kind, offering any assistance to Agnes, whose simple toilet, however, required none. Tea was served in the room in which John was lying. By request, Agnes presided; she felt strangely at home pouring out tea at this Catholic board, but she liked it, though there was none of the elegance of her uncle's mansion; but the very atmosphere seemed to breathe of her religion.

"I ought to have known you were Catholics," said Agnes, laughing, "you have Catholic faces."

"And what's the character of mine?" called John from his couch.

"Rankly heretical," promptly replied the Colonel; "you're the image of Luther."

"You're taking advantage of my situation: wait till I'm up.

"Oh!" with an assumed look of astonishment, "then you're not complimented; wasn't the Reformer said to be handsome?"

"Aggy 'll tell you; she has a painting of him—or had—and there *was* a time when she vow'd she'd never marry till she found a man to look like Luther."

"John! John! that was years ago," rejoined Agnes; but the laugh was against her and she was forced to join in.

It wanted but four days to Christmas. Major Burton was still weak, and though he professed to be "up," yet had to lie down at intervals. Agnes had so much to hear and to tell; but the subject of religion was not intruded, except in a playful way when they were all together. She would like to have it all talked over if it could only be brought about in a serious way; the time was now so short—the very day after Christmas they must start—John and his friend, and then the opportunity would be gone. She decided to consult the Colonel's father.

"Wait, my child (waiting seemed her vocation), wait till Sunday, then we'll see. We can invite him to Mass, that will break the ice."

"Your head is much wiser than mine, I see," she replied, in her pleasant way, and obeyed the old gentleman's request to sing his favorite—she both sang and played well.

CHAPTER VI

A CHRISTMAS JOY.

The Colonel seemed to have innumerable Christmas purchases to make, and Agnes' opinion was wanted so often that she found herself hurried off at a moment's notice to this shop or that. The selection of gifts for people of whose tastes she knew nothing was puzzling; but the drollery with which her companion described his friends and their particular needs was excessively amusing. John's friend was certainly making use of John's sister, and, considering the time remaining to them, she thought the friend a little—just a little—unreasonable.

Saturday came. The Major seemed restless, nervous, and Agnes thought him either not so well, or troubled at the near prospect of their parting. He protested that he was even better, and announced his intention of spending an hour that evening with a friend, a few rods off.

Evening came, and John went. The Colonel appeared jubilant over something he did not see fit to impart to his "feminine guest," as he denominated Agnes. They were on the best of terms—these two—and seemed quite like old friends. Sitting together in the same mellow fire-light, they talked of John. He told her of her brother's bravery, dashing exploits, generosity, and many acts of self-denial, all of which had served to gain for him the

love and admiration of his brother officers, and of the regiment.

"What a *Catholic* he would make! By the way, Miss Burton, the little keepsake he wears—the gold Heart—is a Reliquary?"

"It is."

"I am indebted to it for the most valued friendship of my life."

"How so?"

"I will tell you. I had been in command of the fort but a few days, and knew your brother but slightly, when early one morning, at the very entrance of my tent, I picked up that little Heart. Its full, round form struck me as unusual, and hoping to discover something that would indicate the owner I pushed the spring, as of a watch; it opened and discovered to me the medal and relic. Curious to know the Catholic who owned it, and who must be deploring its loss, I advertised it as found. Your brother presented himself. I was surprised and gratified. He explained that it was a parting gift of his only sister, "of no other value but as a token of her love," he added.

"If it be not an impertinence, may I ask your religion?"

"Lutheran," said he.

I was puzzled. "And your sister's," I ventured to ask. He hesitated, then replied, while his face flushed, "A convert to Rome."

"Indeed! my own Church," I answered. I understood the whole story; it needed not to be told. From that day I sought him; we became friends.

and, strange to say, our conversation invariably turned upon religion. That little Heart was performing its mission well. It had led him to my quarters, and I felt that I too had a mission to perform. It told its own story of the sister's faith, and love; and when he related to me the history of that last evening—told of the rejected crucifix, and your *inconsistency* in so cheerfully substituting that little "bauble"—I knew the secret of that cheerfulness, and my prayers have never ceased for both you and him.

He was very serious now, but with a strange, bright light in his eyes. Agnes' tears were flowing fast.

"Do you see any evidence that he will become a Catholic?"

"I do."

At that moment the door opened, and John entered. His friend sprang up and took his hand, but both were silent. Crossing over to his sister, he asked—and his nervousness seemed all gone:

"Will you take me to Mass with you to-morrow, Aggy?"

"Will you go?" she asked doubtfully.

"Yes, and 'I'll be good,' too, as the children say."

"I don't think it's safe for you to venture inside a Catholic church with that face—so like Luther, you know," observed the Colonel.

"I'm weak yet," returned John, implying a want of strength to properly resent the insult—either to himself or Luther—the Colonel declared he couldn't make out which.

"You won't be lucid, Major, so we remain in the dark. Good night—good night, Miss Burton; don't let him come the Reformation over you—I see he meditates, it," with which warning his pleasant face disappeared.

"Isn't it odd that John should propose going to Mass to day?" Agnes asked of the Colonel, the following morning, while the two were waiting for the other's appearance at breakfast.

"Wouldn't he be an ungrateful savage to deny you that pleasure, when you travelled even by night to see him? I won't accord him any merit."

"But he couldn't deny what I didn't ask. I mean that I think it odd the proposal should come from himself."

"Not *under the circumstances*, Miss Agnes," said the Colonel's father; and so nobody thought it odd but her.

During Mass the brother and sister were separated—the Crossland pew being full. Agnes was distracted by the joy of her brother's presence; the sweet, solemn music, rich in harmony and fine in the quality of the voices that mingled in it, seemed to be heard as through a dream. It seemed to her another *First Benediction*—and the "angel's wings" made the same "rushing" sound as the congregation rose at the last Gospel. The Colonel touched her on the shoulder, and whispered, "Come with me." She followed him to the Sacristy; there were Mr. Crossland and John in conversation with a priest; the face was familiar—the truth flashed across her mind—she had passed his very face on

the threshold one of the times when the Colonel had hurried her out to shop.

"John, can it be?"

"Yes, Agnes, my long waiting, patient sister, your prayers have been heard; I am here to profess my belief in the truths of the Holy Catholic Church—revealed by Him who can neither deceive nor be deceived—here to be baptised in the one true faith, and to go forth a Catholic Christian."

"What a Christmas Gift! Her brother's soul—a treasure above all price—to be one day laid up where treasures abide—enduring as eternity.

And this was not all. Yet another joy awaited the thrice blessed Agnes. Christmas morning, with its triple communion of brother, sister, friend, brought glad tidings of the most unexpected nature—tidings conveyed in a note of Christmas greeting from the uncle. What a memorable day this was ever to be!

"Agnes, my dear niece, when you return, it will be to a *Catholic home*! Christmas Eve will witness our reception into the Church; into the one fold! I send you this Christmas greeting—the most joyful my life has ever offered; and your aunt begs to present, with her fondest wishes, your little *god-child* Willie!"

Was there any joy like unto her joy? Was richer reward ever conferred on patience and long waiting?

Would our readers like to know the sequel?

John returned from the Florida war covered with glory. Soon after, Agnes married; but her hus-

band did *not* look like Luther. He bore a striking resemblance to her *brother's friend*, who had resolved that first night he beheld her kneeling beside her brother's couch in the mellow twilight—that his wife should look like *Agnes*.

"AFTER MANY DAYS."

CHAPTER I.

BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

IT was not without much fatigue and after all the clocks in the neighborhood had struck ten that Mr. Coleman Collins arrived at the door of his majestic mansion in Somerville Square. It had been a fatiguing day—that national holiday, the twenty-second of February, eighteen hundred and many years ago. What with the dinner, to which he had done ample justice; the toasts, to which he had responded in more ways than one, the cheering to the utmost extent of his lungs, and the chorusing of the young Poet Laureate's new song to the "Immortal Washington" (in the enthusiasm of which chorusing the adjective often suffered from a superabundance of "r s" and total want of a "t"), the gentleman in question was sufficiently exhausted to greet the sight of his own door with a long-drawn sigh of relief and the unmistakable nod of recognition; far too much exhausted to observe the ragged urchin darting across the street and halting neath the light of the corner lamp, by the glimmering of which he

eagerly sought out something from pockets which seemed to be in impossible places beneath the tatters covering his shivering body.

"Hallo, sir! I reckon you made a mistake when you paid for your paper this morning, and this gold dollar belongs to you."

Turning slowly and surely, thanks to the friendly aid of the railing. Mr. Coleman Collins blinked at the small piece of ragged humanity now on the steps below him, then looked up and down the street, not quite clear as to what or whom the "Hallo, sir!" applied.

"I say, sir, you gave me this gold dollar instead of a penny."

"Fetch it up here and let me see. Y-e-s, the very one Amy gave me this morning for the four silver quarters," muttered the rightful owner of the bit of gold, surveying the boy, who had descended again to the pavement and was pirouetting in the lamp's light. He slowly put his hand in his pocket.

"Who'd expect such honesty from a ragamuffin like that? How did you know I lived here, and what made you think this belonged to me?"

"Didn't know you lived here, sir; only saw you go up the steps as I was passing."

"But how did you know this dollar was mine?"

"I knew you'd be honest, and didn't look at your money. But all the rest I examined, and when I came to count up and saw the gold shining through the copper, I just knew it was yours."

"And you were right, my man; it is my dollar."

But I suppose you'd have kept it if you had not chanced upon me to-night?"

"I counted on seeing you at the Post-office in the morning."

"So? Well, you'll never lose by being honest. I don't say 'honesty is the best policy;' that's an old saw, fit only for politicians. He who is honest only from *policy* is a thief at heart. There, take your money and be off; you'll sleep well with such a conscience; you've only one, only one; a great many people have two at least."

A pigeon-wing, accompanied by a whistled thrill, was the only response. The pigeon-wing ended on the pavement, but the not unmusical trilling could be heard after the boy had betaken himself off with his rags and his pennies and the dead-latch had admitted the possessor of the gold dollar to the warmth and comfort of his happy home.

It had been the morning of that same twenty-second that Mr. Coleman Collins, while standing on the Post-office steps, had responded to the appeal of the little newsboy who besought him to diminish by one his remaining stock of papers.

"The old story, I suppose," Mr. Coleman had said, "a widowed mother and half a dozen nurslings."

"No, sir," replied the boy promptly, but with a touch of sadness in his voice, "I've no one but myself."

"Then you ought to make a living."

"So I will, sir, with God's help."

"Well put in, my lad; that's the kind of help

we all need. I reckon you don't forget your mother, that 'help of God' sounds like a mother's prayer."

The boy hung his head for a moment, then looked up with moist eyes.

"Couldn't forget her, sir; she's only been dead a year come Easter."

"Ah! Easter. Yes; something connected with eggs and religion," and handing over the pennies, for which he received a paper in return, the gentleman walked away, saying, in an undertone, "eggs and religion. Um! I take both very rare." He smiled at his own witticism, looked after the boy plying his vocation among the passing crowd, and cherished the incident as something to relate.

CHAPTER II.

AMY.

SIX months later and our little newsboy, Walter Herbert by name, found himself established in a more extensive business in the newspaper line. By the generosity of his post-office friend he was now the owner of a stand—modest though it was—and his patrons were increasing daily. He had confided to his “dollar” acquaintance his little history; how he had come from a neighboring town after his mother’s death, expecting to find in strange thoroughfares what there was no prospect of his meeting with in his native place—a fortune. Walter was but twelve—a tender age unless hardened by contact with the poverty side of the world and close intimacy with want—the experience of our little friend from early childhood. Bereavement made him acquainted with grief, and friendless, and his young heart, in its first outburst of sorrow over the lifeless remains of the mother who had struggled with disease and destitution until nature could no longer bear the burden, and death removed it; the young heart, bereft of the only object it had ever known to love, yearned for the same freedom from earth’s miseries that the good God had vouchsafed his long-suffering, but ever loving, parent. Why did the sun shine on, when such a pall had come to mingle with the clouds that had ever over-

shadowed his young life? Why did the flowers blossom and all the external world seem so bright, when he had no one to cling to, no one to love, nothing to nourish but the pale flower-bud of memory? But he soon learned that "the world does not stand still because one heart has ceased to beat and another longs to be at rest forever," and so, "with the help of God"—the help that had carried the mother through her weary life and gave her the fairest hope of eternal rest—he would press forward. His young mind pictured something better in the future; something he had heard of, dreamed of, but had never seen in his wretched surroundings. The "something" assumed a definite shape: it was a place among the first and best in the land. What others had done could not he? That place should be his, "with God's help." He would not make tragedy of his life like all the miserable wretches around him, dragging out their existence in squalidness; he would weave its threads and determine the character of the web, and not leave circumstances to determine it for him. And so he made his way to the great city, and having a definite aim, was working definitely for it, when he chanced upon Mr. Coleman Collins. Walter's mother had been sunk in the depths of poverty through the dishonesty of her husband's business friends, and often had her poor lips breathed the tale to her child.

"Walter, *be honest*. Some poor soul suffers from every dishonest act, and never let such suffering as we have endured be laid at your door. You will soon be alone in the world; but, my darling boy,

God will be your friend. Be honest, and, with God's help, you will surely prosper."

The boy resolved to make honesty the guiding, principle of his life: to possess his soul in patience and endure whatever might betide, but never prove false to his dying mother's earnest injunction.

It was Easter Sunday, just when the bells were ringing joyously, proclaiming the ever-blessed tidings—"Christ is risen"—that with her expiring breath Walter's mother committed him to the care of her risen Lord. Thereafter Easter was to him a sacred season. In all the vicissitudes of his career when beset and often overcome by temptations, the Easter bells never failed to recall him, and he obeyed as a voice from heaven. It was a powerful temptation to deviate from the right—that gold dollar—but he had told the gentleman that very morning of his mother's death a year ago "*come Easter.*" The first Easter, the anniversary of her death, the bells would have no music in their tones for him if he made no effort to find the owner of the alluring golden tempter, and so he thrust it out of sight and waited for the morning to restore the coin.

Walter did not find Mr. Collins himself the least frequent of his patrons, and often there came with him a little lady who called him papa. A rosy cheeked, merry-eyed, richly-dressed little damsel whom he, in his turn, called Amy. Between Amy and Walter (whose tatters had disappeared) there sprang up a friendship, very condescending on her part and equally respectful on his. It was charac-

terized by many of the features of older friendships which sometimes exist between those of different stations in life. Her child's paper was called for with a haughty toss of the curly head, the haughtiness toned down, however, by the sweetness of the voice and smile with which she thanked him, and the pretty way she dropped the money in his hand. It was she who always asked so many questions, and he who gave the replies which sometimes excited her to mirthful laughter, and again produced the shadow of a frown which said, "Stop, you go too far!"

But it was the happiest event of his day, this coming of his good friend and his little daughter; and when, the following autumn, they departed for Europe, half the freshness of earth seemed to go with them, and at the newsboy's stand the brightest sunbeam was thereafter wanting.

"I will hunt through Europe and bring you the prettiest picture to be found," she had said when she bought her last paper."

"That will be yourself," he had ventured to reply, but was immediately extinguished by the retort:

"I said I would *hunt*. Could I hunt for *myself*?" And the haughty shadow chased away the pretty patronizing smile, and settled round the lovely mouth, whose pouting lips said quite unmistakably, "You've gone *much* too far."

"What an extinguisher you are, Amy," said her father, laughing. "Are you going to put down all your beaux as you do poor Walter?"

"Little girls don't have beaux, papa, and when I

am a young lady I sha'n't go to a newsboy's stand to find a beau."

"Hoity, toity! perhaps we'll find a prince for you over the water."

"Perhaps, papa," replied the little maiden, complacently.

CHAPTER III.

WALTER.

YEARS sped on. Walter Herbert had been the recipient of the richest favors of that Providence whose kindness, extended to all, is especially visited upon those who merit it by industry and perseverance. The poor boy has become the rich capitalist: from the weary daily plodding of his newspaper-selling life he had risen step by step on the ladder of fortune until he stands upon its highest round. He looks back at the time when he was toiling at its base, and with a great throb of gratitude his heart yearns to find the benefactor who established the little news merchant and strengthened the impulse of ambition in the soul of the friendless child. But the eve of that trans-Atlantic voyage was their last meeting. In vain had he made inquiries; the only information he gleaned was that some three years after his departure, Mr. Collins had returned from Europe, having been recalled by sudden reverses. He came alone with the little Amy, leaving his wife buried in a foreign land. His star continued to decline, and he soon disappeared from the scene of his former prosperity. In the far West he hoped to retrieve his ruined fortunes, and had gone, but no one knew the positive locality. This much, and no more, could Walter learn; but he would never abandon the hope of finding them if they were still living. Having fought bravely,

unshrinking and undismayed the battles of life, and attained to wealth and distinction, he can retire from active service; but he cannot forget the hand that, finding him in the lowest ranks had put him on the line of promotion. Unfettered by business or family ties, Walter determined to make the tour of the West. Many months he traveled, but with no satisfactory result. No trace could he find of Mr. Collins or the pretty Amy. Grateful remembrance of the good deed done burned deeper and deeper as time rolled on, and the image of the little maiden—the sunbeam of his first “business” year—never faded from his mind or heart. Walter was now twenty-eight; handsome, clever and wealthy, he was much courted, and looked upon as a most eligible *parti*. But all women were alike to him; in his mind there was one ideal, and none came up to the standard. The object of innumerable delicate attentions, he returned them generously in the way of bouquets, opera boxes, etc., but no look or word escaped him that could be construed into an expression of the tender passion by any of the pretty butterflies that flitted around him. Sometimes he reasoned with himself: Was it not absurd, after so many long years, to even hope to find two beings who might be dead—the one dead and the other possibly married? But he was living, why not they? He was single, why not she? He would try Europe; he might at least find the grave of the little maiden’s mother. Another period of years and he had “done” Europe thoroughly. One bright morning in March brought his wandering

feet upon his native shore. There was no end to the welcomes extended to the man of wealth, and he must submit to being lionized. He had entered the arena of the upper-tendom, and there was no escape; he must yield himself up to be buzzed and butterflied and droned and tortured like every other lion with a golden mane. A few weeks after his arrival he was standing on the very corner where in childhood he had cried the morning and evening papers; the very corner, too, where he stood the happy possessor of the enviable "stand." The very corner where he had basked in the light of the sunbeam that for a moment daily glistened on his path, and vanished with the child's paper that lay in waiting. He was thinking of the promise of the little beauty to bring him the prettiest picture Europe could produce, and well he remembered his reply and what it brought upon him—that little vial of retributive wrath.

"Ah! could I but hold their hands and look into their eyes with the freedom of kith and kin, and share with them the fortune which I owe to him, I would be truly happy. With the help of God I'll find them yet, unless He has taken them to a better life."

At that moment a sudden darkness, produced by a heavy cloud, banished all sunlight and threatened a coming storm. Turning hastily he entered the door of an umbrella shop, for he was unprepared for the change of weather, and was in the act of purchasing the necessary protection from the rain, which was already falling, when his attention was

arrested by the voice of a gentleman behind the desk.

"Miss Murry knows that it is against the rules of the establishment to permit silk work to go out without security."

"But, sir, I cannot give the necessary security to-day, and having been so long in your employ Miss Murry considered my past honesty a sufficient security for the present work."

That's not the thing. I do not impeach your honesty, but it would be a bad precedent to establish. Others of equal claims with yourself could demand a like privilege, and we be made thereby heavy losers. Excuse me, but I must order a return of the covers."

"Oh, sir! remember my poor father. This work is our only dependance."

The voice was low and musical, but with such a ring of sadness in it, such a pleading, entreating tone, that Walter turned and surveyed the speaker. Despite the heavy wrappings there was an elegance and grace in the figure that harmonized with the music of the voice. The face was concealed by the folds of a black veil, and otherwise he could not have seen it, for the head was drooping and turned completely from him. The person at the desk leaned forward and said something in a low voice—too low for Walter to catch the words.

"No, sir!" was the decided and could it be indignant answer.

"Then you must return the goods."

She turned away without a word of reply, but

with an air proud and stately as a queen. Walter advanced, raised his hat, and, with a brief word of apology, said :

"I have been a listener to your conversation. I was once the recipient of a favor: will you allow me to return it to you?"

"Sir! I cannot bear insult."

With a quick motion of the hand she threw aside her veil, and the beauty of the high-bred face was that of an ideal picture.

"Pardon me; I do not presume to renew the request to be of service."

The veil was again dropped. Without the semblance of hesitation she opened the door and went forth into the deluge of waters. Quickly Walter Herbert completed the purchase and left the store. In the distance he saw the black figure swiftly gliding and almost ran to reach its side.

"I insist upon your accepting this umbrella. It will give you some slight protection from this cruel storm."

He forced it into her hand, and without another word turned quickly and retraced his steps. Entering the shop, at a glance he perceived that the gentleman was absent from the desk. Approaching the lad who had waited upon him he asked :

"Will you tell me where the lady lives who just left here?"

"Up town," was the short reply.

"I would like to know precisely where as I have loaned her my umbrella and must send for it."

"Oh! I believe she lives in B. street."

"Have the goodness to inquire; I will wait."

"Yes, sir," was the reply brought back; "she lives in B. street."

"Her name, if you please."

"Co-Co-Coleman, I believe. Sue," calling to a young girl passing out, "what's the Dutchess' name? They call her the Dutchess up stairs," he added in a lower tone, "because she takes no notice of nobody."

"Collins, Miss Collins," returned the girl at the door.

Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet Walter could not have been more astonished. Could it be possible that those for whom he had searched so long he had stumbled upon at last, or was it simply another of the same name whom he had seen?

"I'll know before I sleep," he said to himself; then to the lad, "Give me the number and street again."

"Back of 225 B. street."

Calling a cab, Walter drove to the street named—a narrow court, nothing more. Leaving the cab, with instructions to the driver, to wait, he walked up slowly, examining the half legible numbers above the doors.

"223-4. Ah! here it is. Twenty-five; yes, yes, in this little passage-way. Wretched place!"

He was before the very door, and yet his hand refused to knock. For a moment he leaned back against the opposite wall, but an arm's length from the poor-looking abode, and surveyed the exterior of what he hoped would prove to be his old friend's

home—miserable though it must be, yet still he would be rejoiced to find them there, still more rejoiced to take them hence. At length he summoned courage to rap lightly with his cane. The door was opened immediately, and an old man stood before him. Walter had expected to see the lady, and knew that his appearance would explain itself. She would believe he had come for his property. It did not occur to him that she might put another construction upon his following her up so closely; that a gentleman of his appearance would not be likely to entertain such solicitude about an umbrella as to pursue it in narrow courts through a driving rain. "I'll come to the point at once," thought he, scanning the unrecognizable face of the old man.

"I am in search of a gentleman of the name of Collins—Mr. Coleman Collins."

"That is my name sir; will you walk in?"

Walter was seized with a trembling as in an ague. Dropping into the offered chair, he wiped from his brow the perspiration which had suddenly gathered there. Never had he been so completely mastered by a situation. How could he make himself remembered by the old gentleman, who he now thought, had in all probability forgotten long since the newsboy whom his generosity had aided.

"I scarcely know how to introduce myself. I cannot without going back into years long gone—too long, perhaps, for you to remember, Mr. Collins, the little newsboy you established on the corner of Second and B. streets."

"It was my privilege to establish several; their names have passed from my memory—all but one, which has since become so favorably known to the great world that it could not be forgotten."

Walter leaned forward expectingly, "May I ask the name?"

"Walter Herbert."

"I am that same Walter Herbert, who never for one hour has ceased to remember your kindness." He grasped the old gentleman's hand, the tears—true, manly tears of gratitude—poured from his eyes. Then followed explanations from each. When a door opened and admitted the lovely face that had been revealed but for a moment in the umbrella shop Walter and his old friend were still grasping hands and exchanging experiences, one of adversity and the other of successful progress during all his business career.

"This is my daughter Amy, the little lady who took her daily walk to your stand."

The room was carpetless, and bare of almost every comfort, but in Walter's estimation no place had ever been so ornamented. Amy's beauty fulfilled the promise of childhood, though her cheek was pale and a settled expression of care and anxiety was visible in her countenance.

"The Duchess," truly, thought Walter, as she stood before him, resting one hand lovingly, and with something of protection in its curve, on her father's shoulder.

"I have heard your story so often," said she, "father loves to go back to that honest act—and

says it is like the gleam of the gold dollar among the dingy copper coins. He has suffered so much from the fraudulency of the world, that I almost think he would question human integrity altogether were it not for that little incident, engraven indelibly on his memory," she stroked the grey hairs of the old man, and smiled down upon him, while he raised his eyes to her face, and shook his head gravely.

"It is true I have been, in a measure, the victim of stratagem, and deceit, but my own heedlessness and rashness have been the true cause of my downfall.

"Oh, father! you reproach yourself so needlessly," said Amy, passing her arm about his neck.

"No, no, my daughter, I have not unrighteously come to the pass I am in; I am justly here. You, poor child, are the injured one!

We find in Proverbs that '*the prosperity of fools shall destroy them,*' and again, '*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.*' I am an exemplification of the wise man's sayings," said Mr. Collins. "It was my prosperity that destroyed me. I did not ascribe it to the hand of Providence, but had a proud and stubborn spirit, and a severe visitation has come upon me. I thought I could do without God, but now I find, and believe with Euripides who '*preserved reason and religion in the midst of heathen darkness,*' that he who has God for his friend has the fairest hope of prosperity. I thought I could indulge in secret a natural appetite for strong drink. I confidently believed that I could abandon the use

of it at any time I might discover it was likely to gain the mastery; but I learned too late my presumption in depending entirely upon the strength of my own human will.

Religion I knew but little of, save the prayers repeated nightly at my mother's knee—and which I remembered only as something belonging to childhood—Churches, I thought very good for those who needed a Sunday resort, but for myself there were other places more attractive. Sermons I could'nt suffer, and bad music was intolerable; beyond these what was there to go to Church for? It was respectable, to be sure, to be seen in a pew—but my respectability was established and I needed no such trumpet to proclaim it. Thus I went on for years, wrapped in my own *high-mightiness*, insensible to the goodness of Him who had raised me up, and whose hand by one stroke could bring me low in the dust. But the lesson came at last."

Amy moved away and busied herself about some household matters. It was a dreamy sort of way in which her father was talking, a way he had of going over his past life; and she knew that having a listener—and a most attentive one, tho' it pained Walter to listen to these self-reproaches, he would talk on till his story was told. And so he did; the sad tale of his wife's death, financial disasters, residence among foreigners involving him in distress was poured into Walter's ear. Calamities succeeded rapidly, producing misery and despair, and when he found himself once more at home—home only as far as nativity went—it was to find himself also

a beggar. The hard, long years of struggling against the tide that had so relentlessly set in against him, and to which at last having, by reason of sickness, to yield he had been brought to the wretchedness in which Walter found him.

"And yet," he added "these misfortunes have not been altogether unprolific of good. Although I am reaping the bitter harvest years of heedless extravagance garnered up, yet have I found in want and sorrow—what I doubt not would have been lost to me, had my life continued prosperous—I have found my *God*! I recognise His hand in all things and I am learning to say 'Thy will be done.' He gave me a great blessing in my Amy—and by his goodness I keep it—without her I should have been a pauper indeed! Sometimes I am led to think that her pure, good life has preserved us from further evil. In her early girlhood she begged for Baptism—but she must receive it at the hands of an old Priest whom she had seen in the court among the poor. I granted her wish—it was all one to me who administered the sacrament; I had it then so little in my power to gratify any of her girlish longing, for we were depending upon my day's labor in a Western City, that I was pleased to be able to say 'yes' to the child's request—and through her, though long after, I myself was brought to ask for the same blessing. In our religion we are happy. It is the poor man's sunshine."

Amy came over to her father, with a bright smile—"yes, we are happy for all—" glancing around the room, "the saints days, and Church festivals are

the events in our two lives, that relieve them of that depressing gloom poverty brings with it—to papa at least—I was so young when he lost his fortune that I remember little about the luxury he cannot forget.”

“A luxury, I hope to see you enjoying again—” said Walter rising—for he remembered the Cab and driver he had left out in the storm.

CHAPTER IV.

"IT SHALL RETURN."

IN the course of a fortnight the little tenement back of two-twenty-five B—— street was vacated, and its former occupants established in a neat home in the suburbs of the city.

The beautiful picture, the child—Amy had promised in her grand way to the poor news merchant, should yet be his—and the very one too he had ventured to suggest. But it should come with the love he craved, and not be bestowed in mere gratitude—and so he would win it by degrees, and when the heart was in the gift then would he claim it for the adornment of his now bachelor home.

Walter's insensibility to the attractions of society occasioned not a little astonishment, and many comments in the world that courted him; a thousand vague rumors of an attachment abroad floated around, now and then reaching his own ears, and he could but smile as he thought, "abroad indeed; foreign certainly to all the frippery and nonsense of this fashion life."

What a relief to shake the city dust from his feet, and stand in the pure atmosphere of Mr. Collin's almost country home, and be greeted with the words and smiles of truest, sincerest friendship—a friendship based on mutual gratitude.

Amy ever welcomed him with cordial frankness,

and extended her hand without reserve. Independent of her beauty—her rare superiority of mind and character which gradually unfolded itself to Walter's understanding, would have won his admiration, and esteem—only a nature like his own could fully appreciate her, and Walter's was such. Narrowed as her life had been she had met only those of coarser mould, from contact with whom she naturally shrunk—and so her father, her work, and her religion, had been her only intimate companions.

But she could not escape attention by reason of her lovely face—and in the umbrella factory from which she had for a long time obtained work, she was persecuted by the addresses of a junior member of the firm. He had sought her out in her own poor home, but her proud, cold, manner had served to repell him for a time. He at length renewed his offer of marriage, which she declined with a decision, so unmistakable that he did not venture to repeat it. But it brought upon her untold embarrassments—and she was made to feel the vindictiveness of a nature corrupt and gross. To her father she had not revealed the state of affairs out of regard for his peace of mind, and the evening Walter presented himself at this humble dwelling Amy had been weeping in silence and secrecy over the cruel withdrawal of the work. Her funds had run low, the rent was due, and a thousand pressing wants crowded before her—wants that must be supplied, or she must witness her father's suffering for the commonest comforts of his already too comfortless life. Her only recourse was the "mother of per-

petual succor," and to her she had appealed—but the appeal was all for her father—that he might not feel the effect of the junior member's animosity. Once before, almost a year before—she was in as great distress, and the Blessed Mother had not failed her. Night working had told sadly on her eyes, and gradually, but surely her sight failed—until the light, though but of a candle, could not be endured.

"I will make a novena for you, and you join me," her confessor had said—when he found her with this new trial. Amy did join in it, and when the nine days were past, and yet no relief, nor sign of any, but the dull pain and dimness yet, she had thought "If darkness is to be my portion I must bear it patiently—thank God, there's light in Heaven."

But in the course of a few days the pain all left, and suddenly, as though He—the light of the world had spread the clay upon her eyes, and bade her, "go, wash in the pool of Siloe," her eyes were healed. Now, would not the same succor come if begged for? Yes, truly, for it is perpetual—and so to the same source she goes, and returning finds—Walter.

A year has passed. The April sun is shining, and the Easter bells are sending forth their joyous peals. Through devious ways has the Almighty's hand brought Amy and her father, at last, to comfort and repose; this their first Easter in the plea-

sant home of Walter's providing, is the most joyous their hearts have known in long years—Amy experiences what it is to be free from care and anxiety—what it is to see her father enjoying the long lost luxuries he had been born and bred to. Amy knew how sacred to Walter was the Easter season;—he had told her the history of his childhood—what he knew of his mother's life, and of that death-bed the first he had ever stood beside—where and when, he had been committed to the care of the risen Saviour.

"I have never forgotten my Easter duty, and I always feel my mother near me, committing her Son anew to that sacred keeping" said Walter on this last Easter eve. "To-morrow Amy we will go together; I shall feel that we receive my mother's blessing."

Amy's cheek was dyed in blushes. He had won her, and the little maiden and the news-boy of long ago, were now betrothed lovers. She did not indeed, go to a news-boy's stand to find a beau—but he had gone to the dark, narrow alley to find the daughter of his benefactor, not the haughty, richly, dressed maiden, but the poorly clad—poverty pursued woman. Finding her, he had taken the surest method to keep her ever within sight. On this glorious Easter morn we find them, within but a few days of their bridal, happy as when in childhood she took her daily walk and bought the picture paper, and he stood the proud vender of the same—with but this difference—it was not now an exchange of pennies and papers, but hearts and hands. A few more weeks and returned from their bridal trip,

we find Mr. and Mrs. Walter Herbert "receiving" in their city home—elegant as that of Amy's childhood. She is now the cherished wife for whom he so long sought in vain, and he can take her own and the hand of her father, with all the freedom of kith and kin, and make them sharers in the fortune that—"with God's help"—he has accumulated.

Mr. Collins restored to his old position and luxury experiences the truth of the Bible promise "It shall return to thee after many days." His old friends, those whom he had known in his prosperous days, had most of them passed away; some there were who remembered the rich and dashing Mr. Coleman Collins of by-gone times, and many who, having heard their father's talk of him as of a familiar friend, claimed acquaintance on that ground. The father-in-law of Walter Herbert who had gained that "something" he had set out in life with a determination to strive for,—a place among the first in the land—could not be neglected. He could be buried long years in poverty, and be ignored when the pinched, care-worn face now and then came to light in his old business haunts; but then memories were bad, and needed something like the good fortune of the old man's daughter to brighten them up. How quickly this marriage, which furnished food and speculation to all those whom it disappointed in their own hopes, refreshed these bad memories! When it, the strange match Walter had made—had come to be discussed with the composure of an established fact, then everybody found something delightful to relate of Mrs.

Walter Herbert's father,—something that would please her to hear; and so Amy in the course of a few months heard more of her parent in his wealthy days than she had heard in all her life before. Why was it not sooner remembered to his advantage, and not brought to light now when his dark days were past? Those days that would have been so brightened if but half the kind things had fallen upon his ear. He found now only good wishes and congratulations, and accepted all, as something withdrawn for awhile by a just God, but given back to bless his declining years. In the enjoyment of the first substantial pleasure he has known for so long a season, he has no wish to question the sincerity of all these polite nothings addressed to him now. He looks back on the past with a thoughtful eye, and thinks if God blesses with children his daughters union, he, if living, will strive to educate them that they may avoid his mistakes. He has found that Easter has indeed something to do with "eggs and religion." But the latter is not a rarity with Amy's father; he finds, as he has said, a happiness in its practice, that he was a stranger to in those old times, when the poor boy's "*with God's help*" "*come Easter*" fell on his ear like a mother's prayer. Among the many trifles on his table there is one he often looks at and dreams over—an egg-shaped ivory box; opening with a spring it discloses the miniatures of Amy and Walter. On its polished surface, in letters of gold are engraved the following lines "To our father:"

I dreamed beside a brook ; casting a look
Upon its bosom fair ;
On its watery track, returning back,
Came bread, *now* cast in there.
I lingered near the shore, scarce breathing more,
To count the grains of sand,
It gathered had for thee—for all eternity—
And putting forth my hand,
I drew the moist-piece in ; with quivering chin,
I counted—One, two, three—
Faith, Hope, and CHARITY had made for thee
A place, God's home within.

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